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## **Cuba Adrift in a Postcommunist World**

Edward Gonzalez, David Ronfeldt

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Abstract: The Castro regime remains in the throes of its worst crisis. The failure of the right-wing Soviet coup and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR at the end of 1991 have left Cuba adrift in the world and its economy in shambles. Nevertheless, the regime is likely to survive over the short- and possibly mid-term. It possesses a strong, repressive state, while facing a weak "civil society." However, if the economic decline is not arrested, uncontrolled, potentially violent change could be detonated by disaffected elements within the regime or by an increasingly desperate populace.

Abstract: U.S. policy needs to discriminate carefully between a Cuba under Castro and a Cuba after Castro. It also needs to be flexible. Neither heightening U.S. pressures nor lifting the U.S. embargo are advisable at present, and both could lock U.S. policy into irreversible modes. Persisting with the established policy of containment is preferable for now, but it should be modified with a new information and communication policy to promote civil society and prepare for a Cuba after Castro.

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# Cuba Adrift in a Postcommunist World

Edward Gonzalez, David Ronfeldt

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Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

**RAND**

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## PREFACE

This report is the product of a RAND research project on "The Future of Cuba in a Post-Communist World." It was carried out under the International Security and Defense Strategy Program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. It was produced for the client, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and was completed in June 1992.

Because Cuba in mid-1992 is a moving target, this report differs substantially from an earlier draft completed immediately after the abortive August 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union. Taking account of developments since then, the report reassesses the strengths and weaknesses of Cuba's state and society, the prospects for the economy in 1992 and beyond, the likelihood of system change, and the sorts of problems that a Cuba in crisis could present for U.S. policy in the years ahead. Following an examination of U.S. policy options, it concludes with a specific set of policy recommendations.

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## SUMMARY

Fidel Castro's regime remains in the throes of its worst crisis since he assumed power 33 years ago. The regime's political assets have thus far enabled it to survive the economic contraction that has seized the island, but it is likely to face even greater adversity during the remainder of 1992 and beyond. What are Castro's and Cuba's prospects? What is advisable for U.S. policy?

### CUBA IN CRISIS

At the end of the 1980s, the regime became increasingly isolated owing to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the effects of perestroika in the Soviet Union. Cuba's economy, already damaged by Castro's "Rectification Process," was further weakened by diminished trade with Eastern Europe and the USSR. In 1990, Castro's enactment of a "Special Period in Time of Peace" imposed heightened austerity and rationing.

The abortive right-wing coup in the Soviet Union in August 1991 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR have left Cuba adrift in a postcommunist world. The worst effects have been economic. Soviet trade obligations, severely cut back under the one-year trade agreement for 1991, were not fulfilled last year. Whereas Cuba was to receive 10 million metric tons of oil in 1991, down from the 13 million received in 1989, the island was shipped only 8.6 million metric tons. Overall, Cuba's imports from the Soviets fell 71 percent, from \$5.823 billion in 1990 to only \$1.673 billion in 1991.

The outlook for 1992 is even worse. Cuban officials estimate that the island will receive only 4 to 6 million metric tons of oil from Russia. They have begun to refer to the island's "double embargo"—the one imposed by the United States in 1962, the other created by the disappearance of the USSR. They warn that Cuba may well face a "zero option" this year—a cutoff of most imports formerly supplied by the Soviet Union.

The difficulties are cascading. Gasoline rationing has already been drastically tightened. Public transportation has been cut back. Bicycles and draft animals are substituting for autos, buses, trucks, and tractors. Most consumer goods and foodstuffs have been added to the ration book. Although a special "Food Program" has been implemented, and large-scale labor mobilizations are under way in the

countryside, Cuba may be able to produce only between 30 and 40 percent of the food items it previously imported.

The regime faces a deepening crisis because the economy is destined to contract further through 1992 as the level of support from the former Soviet Union continues to plummet. To offset this loss, the regime has bifurcated the island's economy: while socialism governs the internal economy and sugar sector, a new external sector is being created on the basis of joint enterprises with foreign investors in petroleum, tourism, biotechnology, and other selected areas. Thus far, no significant oil discoveries have been announced; the regime is counting instead on tourism and biotechnology to help arrest Cuba's economic decline. Neither of these two new industries, however, is likely to offset losses in Cuba's sugar exports.

Beset by delays, poor weather, and lack of fuel, lubricants, and other critical inputs once supplied by the Soviet Union, the 1992 sugar harvest is expected to be between 5.0 and 6.5 million metric tons. Even if it is in the 6.5 million range, Cuba will find it difficult to secure international markets for its sugar exports. This includes the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Russia constitutes Cuba's single largest potential market and has the oil which the island desperately needs. But Russia has announced that it will limit itself to the one million tons of Cuban sugar that it initially agreed to import, which will result in the CIS importing far less than the two million tons that had been anticipated for 1992. Thus far, Cuba has been unable to reach a trade agreement with Iran, which could compensate in part for the reduced oil deliveries from Russia. In the meantime, a prolonged harvest season this year is cutting into next year's sugar cane, which bodes ill for Cuba's future sugar crops.

Despite the current economic difficulties, Cuba continues to have a strong state. The regime remains disciplined and capable of controlling its population through totalitarian mechanisms. Castro has appropriated Cuban nationalism, and he enjoys adequate institutional and popular sources of support. The social beneficiaries of the revolution—particularly Afro-Cubans and mulattoes who comprise upwards of 50 percent of the population—are bound to identify more with the regime than with conservative, wealthy, white exile leaders in Miami. The political opposition inside Cuba remains weak and repressed.

Meanwhile, as evidenced by the outcome of the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba held last October, Castro and his hard-

line followers will not permit system change—neither political democratization nor economic liberalization. Although considerable membership turnover occurred in the naming of a new Political Bureau and Central Committee, the party congress further concentrated state power in the hands of old and new *fidelistas*. They obtained a renewed commitment from party delegates to maintaining an intransigent hard line.

Nonetheless, the absence of reform, the grim outlook for the economy, and growing privations are eroding societal support for the regime, including among Cuba's youth. Cubans no longer just complain about conditions; they are beginning to openly criticize their government, including Fidel Castro—a phenomenon unheard of in the past. Some 50 human-rights and dissident groups have surfaced, most of them over the past two years. If the economic downslide continues unabated, the regime could face societal unrest perhaps as early as sometime in 1993.

Under such adverse conditions, the key question is whether pressures for system change may come from below among elements of a "civil society" that are independent of the state and capable of challenging it, or from above by reformist elements within the regime itself. At this point in time (mid-1992), neither of these alternatives seems likely.

Small human-rights and dissident groups have proliferated, but other elements of Cuba's civil society remain weak or nonexistent: Cuba does not have a strong Catholic Church, nor is there a private sector (apart from some 160,000 small farmers), an independent labor movement, an opposition political movement or party, or other non-government organizations. Within the regime, the younger generation of political leaders, technocrats, and intellectuals who yearn for some form of liberalization remain marginalized. As long as Castro and his followers remain at the helm, the *fidelista* leadership will block major reforms.

## SCENARIOS THAT MAY CONFRONT THE UNITED STATES

Castro is not inclined to cave in and accommodate to the "new world order." Even as he presents a moderate, pragmatic face to attract foreign investments, he may facilitate drug trafficking through Cuba, especially if the economic situation deteriorates further. Besides drugs, he may well present the United States with other types of challenges and crises over the short term (one to two years) and



medium term (three to five years). In descending order of probability, these are as follows:

**Castro survives to taunt the United States.** The regime believes that its strengths at home, combined with Cuba's limited insertion into the world economy and its protective network of ties with Latin American and other states, will enable it to muddle through. Indeed, if the regime can slow the economic decline over the short-to-medium term, its political assets at home and abroad may well be sufficient for it to survive the crisis without collapsing (much as Mexico survived in the 1980s). Thus reinvigorated, and figuring that the U.S. embargo is increasingly difficult to uphold, Castro's next game may be to try isolating the United States by promoting "two Americas" in which the United States is excluded from the Latin and Caribbean bloc, and perhaps by offering to convene a plebiscite or "free" elections provided Washington lifts the embargo first.

**Another Mariel.** If the new economic strategy proves ineffective and/or internal political tensions mount, Castro may threaten or even facilitate illegal out-migration on a scale vastly larger than in 1980. Despite its potential risks and costs, including the possibility that the regime could lose societal control, a new Mariel could help relieve internal pressures and allow the material assets of the departed to be distributed among regime supporters. Castro could use Mariel II to create a predicament for U.S. policymakers, while rekindling Cuban nationalism over heightened tensions with the United States.

**Violent change is detonated on the island.** Because civil society is too weak to initiate change from below in the face of a strong state, and an intransigent leadership opposes reform from above, prospects for violent change may increase if the economy continues to deteriorate. Such change is less likely to occur in the short term than in the medium term. In ascending order of probability, it could be detonated by one or more of the following scenarios:

- A military coup attempt by junior and middle-level army officers who break with their senior *fidelistas-raulistas* commanders.
- An assassination attempt that involves a small enough number of conspirators to minimize detection, but a large enough number to attack Fidel and Raúl simultaneously.
- Spontaneous, anomic antiregime demonstrations by elements of the population that escalate, provoke heavy-handed repression, and perhaps lead to civil war.

- An undeclared general strike by a weary, desperate populace that simply decides not to go to work because there is nothing to work with or buy.

Because the regime is not likely to succumb peacefully once it is in terminal crisis, these scenarios may lead to higher levels of internal violence than occurred with the demise of most other communist systems.

**A Götterdämmerung-like showdown with the United States.** Although the possibility is remote at this time, Castro might engineer a final confrontation with U.S. "imperialism" if his regime appeared on the verge of unraveling and his quest for eternal glory was slipping away. He could try to provoke the United States through a Mariel II, Cuban naval or air encounters, an attack on Guantanamo, or heavy-handed internal repression. He might calculate that the Cuban people and armed forces, together with much of Latin America, would rally around him, assuring his place in history.

While preparing for these future contingencies, U.S. policy has to move beyond a reactive mode. Sitting strategically astride the Caribbean and in proximity to the United States, Cuba remains the key to Caribbean basin stability and in a position to threaten U.S. interests through drug trafficking and uncontrolled migration flows.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The United States needs to discriminate carefully between (a) U.S. interests and objectives toward Castro and his regime and (b) U.S. interests and objectives toward Cuba, which will eventually be under a post-Castro regime. While U.S. policy should continue seeking the transformation or demise of the Castro regime, it also should work for the emergence of a civil society in order to help lay the basis for a new Cuba that can be free, democratic, market-oriented, and stable and independent over the long run. A long-term policy horizon (over five years) should be employed in order to assure that short-term or even medium-term gains are not realized at the expense of long-term objectives.

Cuba today is a moving target, and U.S. policy may have to be re-tuned periodically as developments break on the island. At present, prudence dictates that the operative policy assumption should be that Castro may remain in power over the short and perhaps medium term.

There are four *generic* types of policy options currently available for promoting U.S. objectives toward the Castro regime:

- Continuing the present policy of active containment, which includes the isolation and selective pressuring of the regime.
- Severely ratcheting up political and economic pressures, and in the event of civil war or extreme repression, perhaps undertaking some form of military intervention.
- Easing up on pressures, for instance by lifting the economic embargo, preferably on condition that the regime allow greater political space and free elections.
- Increasing information and people flows, and undertaking confidence-building measures to open Cuba up—much as the other closed communist systems were penetrated and undermined by increased ties to the West.

Each of these options has its pros and cons. Each is amenable to various combinations. But a key point for U.S. policy is that “Cuba in the long term” is as important a factor to consider as “Castro in the short term” in weighing the pros and cons of each option. From this perspective, the disadvantages and related uncertainties seem to outweigh decisively the advantages with regard to the options that would ratchet up or decrease the pressures on Cuba.

Severely increased pressure is not clearly likely to succeed in bringing about Castro's downfall unless accompanied by direct military intervention on a massive scale. Unless provoked by Cuba, such an intervention is likely to result in high political and diplomatic costs in Latin America, around the world, and at home in the United States. Unless conducted masterfully and almost instantly overwhelmingly, it is also quite likely to provoke an apocalyptic response from Castro and his adherents, and may embroil U.S. forces in civil warfare that negates important objectives for long-range U.S. interests, namely to minimize future bloodshed and nurture the bases for a future transition to democracy in which the United States is a positive partner. Finally, if this option were implemented it would be difficult to shift direction, if only because Castro could treat any such shift as an admission of U.S. failure and a victory for himself. If thought is given to developing a coercive diplomacy option, or to intervening in response to a crisis in Cuba, it would be best to do so in conjunction with OAS members, if not the OAS itself.

The conciliatory option of decreasing the pressure on the Castro regime, notably by lifting the economic embargo, is supposed to nur-

ture reformist elements. But it is not yet clearly known who the reformers are, and whether they carry any weight in Cuban policy circles while Castro remains in power. In the meantime, this option's main effect would probably be to shore up his regime economically and psychologically. Why, when communist regimes have fallen elsewhere, should the United States suddenly rescue Castro and his repressive government? Unless tied to a major *quid pro quo*, this option would throw away the principal U.S. trump card for an uncertain outcome, precisely at a moment when the U.S. embargo is most effective owing to the "double embargo" created by the Soviet Union's collapse. Once the embargo is dismantled and U.S. business interests develop a stake in Cuba, reimpementation of the embargo would become virtually impossible.

The established policy remains preferable to the two alternatives just discussed. One of its strengths is its flexibility. But alone it may not suffice to cope with the situation emerging in Cuba. For example, the established policy could be blindsided by the outbreak of a civil war in Cuba, or by a Latin American campaign to normalize relations with Cuba. More important, it does little to promote a civil society in Cuba, nor does it build bridges to Cuban actors who may become the agents of democratic reform and economic liberalization in the future. It needs to be augmented by strengthening information flows and communication bridges to Cuba—the fourth option, which derives from the significance of the worldwide information revolution.

A comprehensive policy to open Cuba up would go beyond Radio Martí, TV Martí, and putting into operation an enlarged AT&T telephone cable that now lies dormant between the island and Florida. Conventional measures could include finding ways to increase the availability of U.S. and other foreign publications in Cuba, and encouraging telecommunications links to Cuba via third countries such as Mexico and Canada. More technologically sophisticated measures could include finding ways to enable individual Cubans and Cuban organizations to become involved in worldwide computerized electronic mail and conferencing networks. Facilitating the acquisition by Cubans of facsimile and copying machines, hand-held video camcorders, and desktop publishing equipment could provide still another means by which to help open up Cuban society. Finally, expanded public contacts between Americans and Cubans could be encouraged for the purpose of modifying the perceptions of key Cuban groups regarding U.S. objectives and intentions. Such an influence policy could include confidence-building measures with the Cuban military, in which Cuba is notified of impending U.S. military exercises, Cuban

army observers are invited to such exercises and U.S. facilities, and educational exchanges between U.S. and Cuban officers are proposed.

This combination of augmenting the present policy with increased information and communication flows would not foreclose the adoption of another option, nor would it be irreversible. The current policy keeps U.S. options open; increased information and communication flows could expand them further.

But it might be advisable to close one option for the time being. In May 1991, the Bush administration announced that the United States was not planning to intervene militarily in Cuba. A modified U.S. policy might reiterate this stance—perhaps by providing a contingent nonintervention pledge—and tie it to a proposal to explore informational exchanges and confidence-building measures between the U.S. and Cuban armed forces. Such a pledge could make it difficult for Castro to oppose an informational policy; it would undermine his charge that the United States plans to attack Cuba. A nonintervention pledge could also make it easier for Mexico and Spain to work in concert with the United States regarding Cuba. This would be particularly constructive if it led to joint support for dissident and human-rights groups on the island, something Spain but not Mexico has been doing.

The conclusion from this analysis is that the present policy should be sustained but augmented with a parallel policy to increase information flows and build communication bridges to Cuba. By so doing, the United States could be in a better position to foster the development of civil society, to deal with an internal crisis in Cuba, and to lay the bases for an inter-American response (e.g., through the OAS) to an uncontrolled crisis in Cuba. This seems to be the best prescription for continuing to deal with a Fidel Castro who cannot change with the times, while preparing for a post-Castro Cuba that is bound to go through profound changes, requiring yet another U.S. policy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Castro regime is experiencing its most profound crisis since it came to power in 1959, one that could lead to its eventual undoing. The crisis is driven by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. That collapse has caused the regime to lose its ideological moorings as well as the international support system on which the Cuban economy had depended. As a consequence, the island's economic situation deteriorated sharply in 1990 and 1991.

Will the Castro regime follow the path of the rest of the Soviet empire, or will it survive in the years ahead? Castro and his like-minded followers are determined to hunker down and stay the course, relying on the regime's internal and external strengths to control society even as the economic situation continues to deteriorate and popular support weakens in 1992.

The regime may thus be on the verge of a terminal crisis, particularly if the economic decline is not arrested by 1993. But it could confound adversaries and experts alike by surviving. Either eventuality may mean that the "Cuba problem," which has vexed U.S. policymakers for more than three decades, may be prolonged well into the 1990s.

## **2. REGIME WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS**

Since communism's fall in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Cuba stands out as one of the last strongholds of communist orthodoxy. Fidel Castro remains his country's intransigent leader, insisting on retaining his and the Communist Party's monopoly on political power and refusing to relax his regime's viselike control over society. But the economy is deteriorating, owing to the sharp decline in trade with the former communist bloc, and popular disaffection is mounting. Castro is gambling that the factors that make his regime different from its former communist allies in Eastern Europe will enable it to weather the island's economic crisis in 1992 and beyond.

### **CUBA'S DEEPENING CRISIS**

Cuba's economy was in trouble by the end of the 1980s. In 1986, Fidel Castro terminated a successful experiment with economic liberalization that allowed a Peasant Free Market and other private economic activities to flourish. He did this on the grounds that the Peasant Free Market was creating a class of rich peasants and middlemen, thereby undermining Cuba's socialist society. At the same time, he replaced a Soviet-style system of economic planning with his so-called Rectification Process. Under rectification, he recentralized the administration of the economy, resumed personal control of economic decisionmaking, and called for a return to a "moral economy" in which material incentives would be deemphasized in favor of moral incentives for the work force. These measures were reminiscent of the regime's radical policies of the late 1960s; and just as before, they soon worked to worsen the state of Cuba's ailing economy.

Cuba's growing economic crisis also had an important external dimension. The island's economy, which had depended on the former socialist bloc countries for 85 percent of its trade, suffered a severe blow with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. That region had previously accounted for 14 percent or more of the island's trade turnover, but supplies from Eastern Europe plummeted after 1989.

In the meantime, Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and the unraveling of the Soviet command economy disrupted Cuba's trade with the Soviet Union. The USSR alone had accounted for 70 percent or more of the island's trade turnover, which was based on five-year trade agreements between the two countries. But at the end of 1990,

Moscow limited itself to signing only a one-year trade agreement with Havana for 1991, the first time in 15 years that Cuba had been without a long-term economic agreement. Under the new agreement, Soviet oil deliveries to the island were to be scaled down from 13 million metric tons to 10 million, other exports were to be reduced, and the preferential price paid for Cuban sugar was also reduced.

### **Adrift in a Postcommunist World**

The reality in 1991 proved even worse for Cuba than the regime had anticipated. In the first place, owing to their own economic crisis, the Soviets were unable to fulfill their scheduled deliveries under the 1991 agreement, as Fidel Castro himself detailed at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in October 1991. In the second place, the failed coup attempt by Soviet hardliners in August 1991 meant that Castro and his followers could no longer hope that their natural allies in the CPSU, the Red Army, the KGB, and the bureaucracy might retake power in Moscow. Worse still, the abortive coup hastened the disintegration of the Soviet Union. As Castro lamented at the Congress, "To speak of the Soviet Union's collapse is to speak of the sun not rising."

Cuba quickly felt the effects of the failed coup. In September 1991, President Gorbachev announced unilaterally that the USSR would withdraw its special training brigade of 2800 troops from the island commencing in January 1992, a decision that conformed to the new Soviet doctrine of "reasonable self-sufficiency"—and infuriated Castro. The first round of talks between Cuban and Soviet officials over the phased withdrawal broke down in December 1991; on May 8, 1992, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that the talks would be resumed. In the meantime, the Russians had already withdrawn 650 troops earlier in the year. Although some 4900 military technical and training personnel remained in Cuba, and the Soviet signals intelligence facility at Lourdes remained in operation near Havana, it was clear that Cuba was being abandoned by its former patron. In fact, the Soviets cut back their military supplies to the Cuban armed forces, with future military transfers to be conducted on the basis of commercial sales.

The Soviet Union's disappearance from the world's political map has devastated the Cuban economy. Recent statements by the Cuban leadership now give us a more complete picture of what happened in 1991 and what Havana expects is likely to occur in 1992:

- Cuba's imports from the former Soviet Union fell 71 percent, from \$5.823 billion in 1990 to \$1.673 billion in 1991.<sup>1</sup>
- Instead of receiving 10 million metric tons of petroleum as specified under the 1991 agreement, Cuba received only 8.6 million metric tons last year. Cuban authorities now estimate that the island will receive between 4 and 6 million metric tons this year—which amounts to 31 to 46 percent of the total for 1989.<sup>2</sup>
- The contraction in nonpetroleum imports from the Soviet Union last year was even more severe. Cuba failed to receive most of the capital goods, spare parts, consumer goods, raw materials, grains, and other foodstuffs that had been contracted under the 1991 agreement.

As a consequence, the regime has begun to refer to the "double embargo"—the one imposed by the United States since 1962, and the other created by the disappearance of the USSR. Because of the latter development, the government has had to abandon its traditional five-year and even one-year planning processes, replacing them with day-to-day crisis management and improvisation.

#### **Forced Economic Retrenchment and Mobilization**

Even before the precipitous drop in trade last year, the Castro regime had begun to prepare the Cuban people for the worst. In August 1990, Castro proclaimed a national emergency, announcing new austerity measures and heightened mobilization to meet the economic crisis under what he called the "Special Period in a Time of Peace." The austerity program includes the following:

- Drastic rationing of gasoline and fuel oil to both the state and private sectors; sharp reduction in bus transportation; use of 700,000 or more bicycles for personal transportation; substitution of some 400,000 draft animals for trucks, tractors, and combines.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hamburg DPA, citing the Cuban newspaper *Trabajadores*, in *FBIS-LAT-92-018*, January 28, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Juventud Rebelde*, January 26, 1992, interview of Carlos Lage, in *FBIS-LAT-92-033*, February 19, 1992, p. 6. Lage is one of the new appointees to the PCC Political Bureau, and serves as Executive Secretary of the Council of Ministers.

<sup>3</sup>At the start of 1992, the government further moved to conserve fuel by announcing additional restrictions on gasoline and electricity consumption, together with new cuts in bus schedules.

- Reduction of the work week to five days; reassignment of surplus Communist Party workers to more "productive" jobs in industry and agriculture; reduction in the hours of plant operation in various industries; and the closing down of a nickel-processing plant and oil refinery.
- Inclusion of an additional 180 consumer goods and 28 food items to the list of rationed items;<sup>4</sup> and the halting of construction of new schools, day-care centers, and urban housing.

In 1989-1990, the government also launched an ambitious "Food Program" that aimed at increasing the production of rice, tubers, vegetables, plantains, bananas, beef, milk, poultry, eggs, and fish, and at making major cities and provinces self-sufficient in the supply of a number of food staples. To accomplish these goals, it has mobilized tens of thousands of urban workers for agricultural work for 15-day periods on a rotational basis or, in the case of younger volunteers, for two-year periods. Unlike in the 1960s, when large-scale mobilizations were employed by the regime, the volunteers are enticed by the prospect of higher wages, three meals a day, comfortable quarters, and a Club Med ambiance for after-work partying.<sup>5</sup>

However, successful agricultural production has eluded the Castro regime for over three decades. Under today's adverse conditions, when there are growing shortages of previously supplied Soviet and East European fuel, fertilizers, and spare parts, and a return to primitive farming methods, the Food Program may barely be able to supply 10.7 million Cubans with sufficient foodstuffs to sustain them at a subsistence level. Following her three-week visit to the island in November 1991, the normally upbeat Gillian Gunn was pessimistic about the Food Program's ultimate ability to meet consumer needs:

To date the program has shown limited results, but fields planted in 1990 have not yet matured and production should improve in 1992. Even after the Food Program is fully implemented, however, Cuba will

<sup>4</sup>According to one economist who has closely monitored the Cuban scene: "At the end of 1991, monthly rationing quotas (per person) allowed three-quarters of a pound of beef; 2 lbs. of chicken; 1.5 lbs. of cooking oil and lard; two-thirds of a pound of beans; 4 lbs. each of potatoes, tomatoes, and sugar; one-quarter of a pound of coffee; and 20 eggs. The food rations are not guaranteed, hence, long lines form in front of state stores early in the morning." Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Is There Life After the USSR?" in *Hemisfile*, January 1992, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>See Richard Boudreaux, "The Party Line is Party," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1991, p. E1.

be able to produce locally only between 30 and 40 percent of the food previously imported.<sup>6</sup>

Like most other Cuban production targets in the past, even this 30 to 40 percent estimate may yet prove to have been too high.

In the meantime, the Cuban people must reckon with the increasingly real prospect that they will be faced with the "zero option" this year—a virtual cut-off of imports from the former Soviet Union, forcing them to endure even greater austerity, privations, and sacrifices. At best, such a future could lead to a lower but not necessarily impoverished standard of living; or it could portend the "Haitianization" of the island if Cubans regress to conditions found at the turn of the century.

#### **THE PARTY CONGRESS AND ITS AFTERMATH: NO SYSTEM CHANGE**

Within Cuba, hopes for major reform were dashed by the outcome of the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), which was finally convened in October 1991 after several postponements. The Congress did not open the way for "system change" in terms of either the democratization of the political order or the marketization and privatization of the economy. Instead, it reaffirmed the existing distribution of political power and the regime's political and economic course. It did not reintroduce the Peasant Free Market as many Cubans had hoped it would, although it approved the regime's efforts to attract foreign investment and technology.

#### **The Greening of the *Fidelista* Leadership**

The Congress adopted organizational and personnel changes that aimed at avoiding the arteriosclerosis that contributed to the downfall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The Party Secretariat and its departments were dissolved, thereby completing the process—which had already been under way—of either eliminating their functions or transferring them to other state and government organs. The Central Committee also underwent a substantial turnover, with new people making up about 60 percent of its 225 members.

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<sup>6</sup>Gillian Gunn, "Cuba's Search for Alternatives," *Current History*, February 1992, p. 61.

The Congress also named a new Political Bureau, whose number was now increased to 25 full members with no alternates. As with the Central Committee, the turnover in the Political Bureau seemed significant in several respects:

- Several veteran *fidelistas* and *raulistas* were not renamed, among them Vilma Espin, Armando Hart, Pedro Miret, and Jorge Risquet.
- Of the fifteen new members, three are in their 50s, eight are in their 40s, and one is only 36 years of age, which means that nearly half the Political Bureau's members no longer come from the Castro brothers' generation of the 1920s and 1930s, or from the preceding one.
- The naming of Carlos Aldana to the Political Bureau confirmed his rising status within the Party, while PCC provincial secretaries and other Party functionaries claimed an additional eight seats—the largest single bloc within the new Political Bureau.<sup>7</sup>

These and other changes effectively strengthened *fidelista* control over the regime. The congress marked a new high in the personality cult of Castro while devolving greater power to him, his brother, and their hardline followers. With the dissolution of the Secretariat and its Central Committee departments, policymaking authority was reconcentrated in the 25-member Political Bureau that is presided over by Castro as Party First Secretary, with his brother, Raúl, as Second Secretary. A new, reformist leadership was nowhere evident either in the composition of the new Political Bureau or in the policies adopted by the congress.

The new membership of the Political Bureau represents a younger generation of *fidelistas*, supplemented by some longtime loyalists. Save for Aldana, Roberto Robaina (First Secretary of the Union of Young Communists), and Jorge Lezcano (First Secretary of the PCC in Havana City), most of the younger appointees are scarcely known, have no power base or constituency of their own, and are no more likely to differ with the *lider maximo* over policy questions than were their predecessors. Two of the new but older appointees, Division General Julio Casas and Julian Rizo, evidently were named to the Political Bureau because they are followers of Raúl Castro. In the case of Rizo, his loyalty outweighed his reputation for incompetence.

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<sup>7</sup>Excluding Raúl Castro, who serves as Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, the military constitutes the next-largest bloc, as three Division Generals and one Army Corps General, Abelardo Colomé, who is Minister of Interior, were named to the new Political Bureau.



Most telling is the fact that trained economists and technocrats are conspicuously absent from the Political Bureau's new lineup. There are five military representatives; all the remaining twenty civilian members have been full-time political functionaries who have made their careers in the Party, the state-government bureaucracy, and mass organizations and the writers union. Except for one holdover, all lack graduate training in economics, political economy, or even public administration; several did not go to college or received highly politicized training in "economics" and "political science" in Party schools.<sup>8</sup> The single exception is Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, a Marxist economist prior to the revolution. But at over 79 years of age, and with a track record of not contesting Castro's radical policies, Rodríguez is not likely to have much impact. For a government that is confronted with its worst economic crisis in 33 years, the Political Bureau's new lineup shows a remarkable dearth of economic talent.

### Limited Reforms

Three anticipated reform measures were adopted by the Fourth Party Congress. One involved the regime's new economic strategy toward foreign participation in joint ventures, which will be discussed in detail in Section 3. The other two involved the issues of religion and direct elections.

The Congress agreed to open the PCC to religious believers. Thus, for the first time, Catholics, Protestants, and even adherents of *santería* and other cults are eligible for Party membership. By loosening its admission requirements, the Party may be attempting to strengthen its appeal among blacks and mulattoes, who now comprise some 50 percent of the island's population.

<sup>8</sup>The educational background of the 25 members is as follows, with the names of new members in italics: (1) architecture (*Osmani Cienfuegos*); (1) biochemistry (*Concepción Campa Huergo*); (1) chemical engineering (*Yadira García Vera*); (1) civil engineering (*Nelson Torres Pérez*); (1) [graduate] economics (*Carlos Rafael Rodríguez*); (1) economics (*Esteban Lazo*, who was educated in Party schools); (1) engineering (*Roberto Robaina*); (1) high school (*Candido Palmero Hernández*); (2) journalism (*Carlos Aldana*, *Juan Almeida*); (1) law (*Fidel Castro*); (2) medicine (*Carlos Lage Cifila*, *José Ramón Machado Ventura*); (5) military sciences (*Raúl Castro*, *Julio Casas Rigüeiro*, *Leopoldo Cintra Frías*, *Abelardo Colomé Ibarra*, *Ulises Rosales del Toro*); (3) political science (*Alfredo Jordan Morales*, *Jorge Lezcano Pérez*, *Julian Rizo Alvarez*); and (4) education unknown (*Maria de los Angeles García Álvarez*, *Alfredo Hondal González*, *Abel Prieto Jimenez*, *Pedro Ross Leal*). Data drawn from *Research Institute for Cuban Studies, IV Party Congress Cuban Communist Party Politburo Members Biographies* (October 1991), North-South Center, University of Miami, 1991.

The Congress also voted to have delegates to the National Assembly of People's Power directly elected. Up to now, these national delegates have constituted part of the *nomenklatura*: they have been appointed by the Party apparatus from among provincial delegates who themselves have been indirectly elected—again by the Party apparatus—from among a pool of municipal delegates. Hence, the direct election reform is ostensibly a step toward more effective political participation.

However, the rules for implementing this modest reform will not be announced until October 1992, and will not go into effect until the 1993 elections. This lengthy delay reflects the vanguard mentality of Castro and other hardliners, who do not want the National Assembly of People's Power to become an independent legislative body. Meeting but twice a year, the National Assembly has been a compliant legislature since its inception in 1976, with its members customarily taking their cue from Castro and other leaders. Whether direct elections will embolden the new delegates to be more critical and outspoken, much less challenge the leadership, remains to be seen.

### **The Primacy of Politics and Political Solutions**

In the end, the Fourth Party Congress made it clear that Castro and his hardline followers will block any steps toward fundamental system change. In fact, it revived some features of the radical pre-institutionalized order of the 1960s:

- As in the 1960s, political power remains concentrated in a single man and his circle of compliant followers, with trained economists and technically competent leaders excluded from the Political Bureau.
- As it did in the 1960s, the regime is stressing politically and ideologically driven solutions for the troubled economy—among them retention of a centrally directed command economy, a system of mass mobilization and moral incentives for the work force, and a program of forced austerity under the Special Period.

What is different from the 1960s is that the congress approved foreign investments through joint ventures in the external sector of the economy, but it nonetheless rejected marketization and privatization for the rest of the economy.

The regime's preference for political solutions was made clear by Carlos Lage, one of the Political Bureau's new members and the

Executive Secretary to the Council of Ministers, in an interview in January 1992:

We try to achieve an equitable distribution of what we have. This demands an effort at centralization. But we are also battling for rationalization, organization, and conservation and are making constant appeals to the patriotism and revolutionary awareness of each worker as the only "mechanism" capable of promoting the initiative and interest of all in lifting the country up from the emergency conditions in which we are living.

And he added, "We must not seek technical solutions [i.e., through market mechanisms] to problems."<sup>9</sup> Such an aversion to the market is characteristic of the Cuban leadership.<sup>10</sup> Time and again it has turned away from market forms of organization in the vain hope that if it can only discover the right management techniques, the command economy will take off.

### SIGNS OF GROWING POPULAR DISCONTENT

The economy's deterioration and the regime's neo-Stalinist course have given rise to increased political alienation, discontent, and criticism among sectors of Cuban society.<sup>11</sup> One sign of this is the increasing crime rate being reported by the Cuban government as well as the foreign media, including not only "economic crimes" involving black market and underground capitalist activities, but also crimes of violence that were virtually unheard of in the past. As a consequence, the regime has had to introduce new "vigilance" measures to fight economic crimes and what it calls "anti-social behavior."<sup>12</sup> Another

<sup>9</sup>*Juventud Rebelde*, January 26, 1992, in *FBIS-LAT-92-033*, February 19, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>For example, the regime's limited experiment with the Peasant Free Market, initiated in 1980, began to be severely curtailed by 1982 and was stopped in 1986, even though it had succeeded in providing consumers with foodstuffs that previously had been unavailable. On the politics and economics of the Peasant Free Market, see Jonathan Rosenberg, *Politics and Paradox in the Liberalization of a Command Economy: The Case of Cuba's Free Peasant Markets, 1980-86*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992.

<sup>11</sup>Even Medea Benjamin, a leftist sympathizer of the regime, who lived in Cuba from 1979 to 1983 and made a return visit in 1990, acknowledges that "people are questioning issues that previously were taken for granted. There is a lot of soul searching going on." Medea Benjamin, "Soul Searching," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, August 1990, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>In December 1991, a new Unified Vigilance and Protection System (SUVP) was inaugurated in Havana, with its activities being coordinated with the National Revolutionary Police and Committees for the Defense of the Revolution; the SUVP has

sign is the proliferation of dissident and human rights groups since the end of the 1980s, a development discussed in detail later.

The regime's much-touted ability to fulfill the "basic needs" of the population is also being adversely affected by the economic crisis. Basic needs had been met through the allocation of such "public goods" as free education, health services, and day-care centers for working families, free or inexpensive meals for workers and students, low-cost housing and public transportation, and equal food and clothing allotments through the rationing system. Now, many of these public goods have had to be reduced, more items have been rationed, and ordinary Cubans can no longer entertain the hope as they once did that their material lot—and that of their children—will improve in the future.

Moreover, the contraction of the economy now magnifies the inequalities that have always been present between Cuba's political and social classes. Whereas some of the needs of the general population are met through the allocation of public goods, party officials, government managers and technocrats, and state-supported scientists, writers, and artists, etc., enjoy special access to more highly prized, restricted, *private goods*—ranging from spacious homes and apartments to foreign automobiles, appliances, electronics, and clothing.<sup>13</sup> In a major address on December 27, 1991, Political Bureau member Carlos Aldana warned the political class that any sign of ostentatious living and special privilege could not be tolerated at a time when ordinary Cubans were enduring extreme privations and hardships.

Meanwhile, the regime must contend with generational tensions. For some time, visitors to the island have observed that young people are generally apolitical, unaccepting of Cuba's no-frills society, and at odds with many of the ideas and values of the older generation of revolutionary leadership, the majority of whom are in their fifties and

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since spread to other cities. For a report on increased economic pilfering of state enterprise and related black market activities that was published in Bohemia, February 21, 1992, see *FBIS-LAT-92-049*, March 12, 1992, pp. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup>Although some of the leadership lead relatively austere lives, the degree of privilege and inequality enjoyed by Cuba's "new class" generally correlates with rank. Fidel Castro has at his disposal at least one home in each of the island's 14 provinces, in addition to several more in Havana and private hunting and fishing lodges. While others cannot compete with the "Maximum Leader" in this respect, the higher echelons of Cuba's political class occupy the luxury homes and apartments of Miramar, Vedado, and other exclusive districts of Havana, and enjoy privileged access to the beach homes of Varadero and restricted vacation spots. See Juan Clark, *Cuba, Mito y Realidad: Testimonios de un Pueblo*, SEATE Ediciones (Miami), 1990, pp. 437-508.

sixties.<sup>14</sup> Responding to the findings of attitudinal surveys and other information, the regime has eased some of its rigid, ideological positions in an effort to engage Cuba's postrevolutionary generation—the 60 percent of the island's people born after Castro came to power. Thus it has provided more youth concerts and entertainment centers, although many of the latter are reserved for hard-currency-paying tourists.

Despite such concessions, disaffection among Cuban youth appears to be spreading. Juvenile delinquency has been on the rise, while student protests and anti-Castro activities reportedly occurred in late 1990 and early 1991.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the *balseros* or rafters who have escaped the island by crossing the Florida Straits are young men. Increasing numbers of Cuba's young artists, musicians, and athletes have taken advantage of their travels abroad to defect in recent years. At least one quarter of the 455 elites who defected between April 1, 1990 and October 30, 1991, according to a study by The Cuban American National Foundation, were members of the Union of Young Communists.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, one correspondent reported in 1991 that a Communist Party survey of Matanzas province found that few young people wanted to join the Union of Communist Youth, despite the fact that the UCJ constitutes the first step toward Party membership and upward mobility. He also quoted one student who quipped that Castro's new slogan "Socialism or Death" constituted a redundancy because "socialism is death."<sup>17</sup> A not too subtly titled song, "The Man is Crazy," composed and sung by Cuba's leading balladeer, is said to be highly popular among young people, who sing it aloud when they are alone.

<sup>14</sup>Made exclusively for viewing by the Cuban leadership, but smuggled out by a defector from the Ministry of Interior in 1988, a film on Cuban youth showed some to be drug addicts, others as disaffected from government or bored with politics, and most as complaining over the absence of recreational outlets and entertainment activities. According to a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent, the Cuban Academy of Science over the past five years has conducted 17 surveys of youth for the Communist Party's leadership, which "confirmed the younger generation's frustration over consumer goods shortages, a rigid bureaucracy, a dogmatic school system and restrictions on personal freedom." Boudreaux, "The Party Line is Party," pp. E1, 6.

<sup>15</sup>"Students in the mathematics and economics faculties at Havana University, and at colleges in the inland towns of Las Tunas, Manzanillo, Bayamo, Villaclara and Santiago, have been detained by the secret police after they daubed anti-Castro graffiti on walls, shouted anti-Castro slogans or took part in other 'anti-state activities.' The Villaclara students called themselves New Lights of Liberty." *Foreign Report*, February 21, 1991, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>*The Washington Post*, December 15, 1991, p. A44.

<sup>17</sup>Boudreaux, "The Party Line is Party," p. E6.

The soaring number of Cubans who have successfully crossed the Florida straits in crudely made rafts, inner tubes, and small boats in recent years reflects the growing desperation of the general populace with conditions on the island. Although it is not comparable to the current exodus of boat people from Haiti, the phenomenon of the *balseros* needs to be placed in the Cuban and not Haitian context. In 1986 there were 26 *balseros*, 44 in 1987, 59 in 1988, and 390 in 1989.<sup>18</sup> In 1990 the number reached 497, but before the end of June 1991 the number had already climbed to over 1000, more than double the previous year's figure.<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1991, over 2200 *balseros* had made the perilous crossing to Florida. As of early May 1992, there were already over 2000 more who had reached the Florida Keys.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, the *balseros* represent but a minute fraction of mass discontent building up on the island. Indeed, there were some 50,000 visa applications from Cubans wishing to come to the United States during the 1991 fiscal year, compared to 28,000 in 1989. By the end of July 1991, the State Department was faced with a backlog of 40,000 applications, forcing it to stop accepting further applications. It began accepting new applications on May 1, 1992, and is expecting at least another 50,000 visa requests.<sup>21</sup>

The regime's tightening of social controls and security measures is itself suggestive of the extent of growing discontent. To punish and thereby discourage antiregime criticism and opposition, the Ministry of Interior has organized "rapid-reaction brigades," composed of regime supporters, among the populace. The brigades engage in mob action against known critics, dissidents, and opponents of the regime, seeking to enlist the participation of local residents in so-called *actos de repudios* (acts of repudiation).

In one of the more publicized incidents, María Elena Cruz Varela, a dissident poet who had called upon Castro to allow political reforms, was physically assaulted by a rapid-reaction brigade in November

<sup>18</sup>Foreign Report, December 31, 1989.

<sup>19</sup>Los Angeles Times, April 16, 1991, p. 5; and The Wall Street Journal, June 26, 1991, p. A8. Most of the *balseros* complained of the extreme privations they had had to endure, including the absence of meat for three months, all of which had begun to make life on the island unbearable. The New York Times, June 2, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup>Howard W. French, "Caribbean Exodus: U.S. Is Constant Magnet," The New York Times, May 6, 1992, p. A8.

<sup>21</sup>Over 23,000 visa applications were approved by U.S. authorities in FY 1992, out of the 50,000 total requests. Telephone conversation with an official in the Office of Cuban Affairs, Department of State, May 5, 1992.

1991.<sup>22</sup> Two months later, Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, Cuba's most prominent and most jailed human rights activist, also found himself under siege for 15 hours by a mob armed with iron bars:

The mob, estimated to number between three hundred and five hundred, destroyed his garage, where he did his work, and the files and furniture inside. It tried to break down the back door of his house but couldn't, because the door was reinforced with steel bars. It broke the windows and threw pots of paint and bottles of ink at the walls. It called for Sanchez to come out and face his accusers. The mob was directed by police, and they called for Sanchez to come out so that they could protect him.<sup>23</sup>

By not covering up such *actos de repudios*, the regime's intent is clearly to intimidate potential opponents. In fact, one high Cuban official told Gillian Gunn that the government prefers "to arrest dissidents now rather than have to shoot them later."<sup>24</sup>

#### REGIME DISCIPLINE, CONTROL, AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The regime's pervasive totalitarian apparatus—comprising the Ministry of Interior with its agents and informers, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the rapid-reaction brigades, and the resulting climate of mistrust among the populace—enables it to control societal behavior. But the regime possesses strengths that, together with the island's mild climate, distinguish it from the East European communist states that collapsed so abruptly in 1989. Indeed, the Cuban state was sufficiently strong and efficient to host a successful Pan American games in August 1991 without public incident, despite the island's economic deterioration.

<sup>22</sup>"On November 19th [1991], a mob chanting hate and threatening mayhem broke into Cruz Varela's apartment and dragged her down the stairs and into the street, where it forced her to eat some of her political writings while her daughter watched. Cruz Varela was then arrested and sentenced to a two year prison term, as were other members of her group." John Newhouse, "A Reporter At Large—Socialism or Death," *The New Yorker*, April 27, 1992, p. 56. See also Howard W. French, "Castro Meets Dissent with an Iron Hand," *The New York Times*, December 8, 1991, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Sánchez was able to tape part of the episode, during which the police officer in charge was heard instructing the mob to strike Sánchez with fists and feet if he came out. Newhouse, "A Reporter At Large," p. 75. Newhouse had interviewed Sánchez less than a week before.

<sup>24</sup>Gillian Gunn, speaking on "The Current Situation in Cuba," at the Americas Society's conference, Cuba at the Turning Point, New York City, March 13, 1992.

To be sure, as in the communist societies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, many Cubans in and out of government may find that they can survive only by outwardly feigning enthusiastic support for the regime. Such behavior stems from cynicism in parroting the party line, realism in dissimulating loyalty, and inertia in accepting the status quo out of fear or a lack of better alternatives. Under such conditions, a totalitarian society finds it hard to know itself, and it is even harder for foreign observers to plumb the true thoughts and sentiments of the populace. This caveat notwithstanding, Cuba nevertheless appears to be different from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in several important respects.

### Leadership

For many Cubans, Castro retains moral authority as an authentic national hero, charismatic leader, and father figure who personifies the revolution. This sentiment is reinforced by a political system that shields him from responsibility for the failure of his policies and maintains his image as a dedicated, selfless revolutionary.<sup>25</sup> Within the regime he remains its unifying, guiding, and indispensable force—the aging patriarch of the revolutionary family, yet the embodiment of its presumably timeless ideals.<sup>26</sup>

### Nationalism

Unlike most of Eastern Europe, today's Cuba is the product of an indigenous revolution not imposed by the Red Army; that revolutionary heritage provides the regime with a nationalistic mystique and a reservoir of political legitimacy. Exploiting anti-Americanism, Castro has appropriated and shaped Cuban nationalism as a sustaining force for his regime. Cubans take pride in their country's many accom-

<sup>25</sup>A Cuban intellectual, who favors liberalizing reforms, told Gillian Gunn that "people think of Fidel as one thinks of a father. You may be annoyed with him, and disagree with him, but in a crisis you trust that his decisions will be motivated by what he thinks is best for the entire family." Gunn, "Cuba's Search for Alternatives," *Current History*, February 1992, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup>East European observers might argue that the personality cult surrounding Ceausescu and other communist leaders concealed how despised or unpopular they actually were prior to the overthrow or collapse of their regimes. However, unlike Castro—who is an independent, revolutionary leader in his own right—the East European leaders were critically dependent upon Soviet power from the outset of their rule; none possessed his charismatic authority; none transformed their respective countries into world-class actors; none was as adroit as Castro in obtaining maximum levels of Soviet economic support after 1970; and none survived the hostile policies of a nearby superpower as Castro has done for more than three decades.



plishments and its rise to the status of a world-class player—whether on the battlefields of Angola and Ethiopia or on the playing fields of international sports competition. In addition, Cubans regard their nationalism as an expression of the highest tradition and ideals of Latin American nationalism in general.

### Elite Cohesion and Discipline

Unlike its counterparts in Eastern Europe, Cuba's top leadership is composed largely of first-generation revolutionaries; as a consequence, it still retains much of its ideological commitment and faith. Below the top echelon, the tens of thousands who make up Cuba's new political class have something in common: though not a monolithic body, the *nomenklatura*, lower-level militants, and state-supported artists and intellectuals are all dependent on the regime for their livelihood, power, and privileges. Having a vital personal stake in the existing order, they remain *fidelistas*, if not out of conviction then out of necessity—a fact driven home by the fate of deposed communists in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Castro's "Socialism or Death" is thus more than a slogan: it symbolizes what is at stake for Cubans who have aligned themselves with his regime.

### Loyalty of the Army

The Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) constitutes the revolution's founding institution, and it remains under the command of *fidelista* and *raulista* senior officers personally loyal to the two Castro brothers.<sup>27</sup> Under Soviet tutelage, the FAR has become a professionalized military that has proved itself in overseas combat and subordinated itself to civilian authority—an authority that, if not represented by the Party, is lodged in the person of Fidel. Thus, in June 1989, 47 generals and admirals of the Military Court of Honor meekly went along with the two Castro brothers in ordering that Division General Arnaldo Ochoa, Cuba's most-decorated combat soldier and "Hero of the Republic," be "tried for high treason and that the full weight of

<sup>27</sup> All officers are *fidelistas* because Castro is their commander-in-chief as well as head of the party, state, and government. But within this broad category there are two subgroups of senior officers who served under Fidel or Raúl during the guerrilla campaign. Those senior officers who originally remained under Castro's command in the Sierra Maestre are the *fidelistas*, while those who joined Raúl in establishing the Second Front became the *raulistas*.

the law fall on him," on grounds that he allegedly engaged in drug trafficking and other "serious moral offenses and corruption."<sup>28</sup> Besides covering up the government's large-scale involvement in drug operations that dated back to 1980, the Ochoa trial eliminated a potential contender or troublemaker from the army, perhaps even an actual coup plotter. It reaffirmed the Castro brothers' authority over the military, demonstrating the FAR's loyalty and obedience to Fidel and Raúl even when it came to approving maximum punishment for one of its own. Since then, the FAR high command has shown no signs of independence or deviation from *fidelista* orthodoxy.

### Elite-Mass Ties

Because of its vanguard mentality, the Castro regime remains self-steering and undemocratic. As a result, it sometimes deludes itself about both its degree of popular support and its identification with the masses at large.<sup>29</sup> Yet it remains less affected by the arteriosclerosis that beset the Soviet and East European regimes. The Cuban leadership makes continuing conscious efforts to overcome the distance between itself and the people: Fidel tours the island to take the pulse of his subjects; the Party commissions attitudinal surveys; the regime tries to respond to the complaints of the younger generation; the leadership extols (though does not practice) the principles of egalitarianism; and party cadres were "consulting with the masses" prior to the Fourth Party Congress.

<sup>28</sup>During the show trial, Ochoa was linked to the drug-related operations of Colonel Antonio de la Guardia of the Ministry of Interior (MININT), who formerly had been in charge of Castro's personal security force. As an officer in MININT's elite Special Troops unit, de la Guardia was posted to a special intelligence department in the late 1980s that was tasked with the mission of breaking the U.S. embargo and securing foreign exchange, including by facilitating drug running through Cuba. For the government's official line denying such collusion and blaming de la Guardia and Ochoa as renegade operators, see the edited trial transcripts and other selected documents contained in *Case 1/1989: End of the Cuban Connection*, José Martí Publishing House (Havana), 1989. For evidence of Cuba's drug-trafficking activities and an analysis of the Ochoa trial, see Office of Research, Radio Martí, *Cuba—Situation Report*, Washington, D.C., May–August 1989, pp. 1–38, 61–106.

<sup>29</sup>Thus, the regime was unprepared for the 10,000 Cubans who sought diplomatic asylum in the Peruvian embassy in April 1980, and for the Mariel exodus that followed. More recently, it had to hastily close down the showing of a Cuban-made satirical film, "Alice in Wondertown," a scathing political indictment of Cuba's communist system, because of the huge audiences it had attracted in just four days. See *The New York Times*, June 29, 1991, p. 2.

### Societal Self-Discipline and Control

As in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Cuba's totalitarian system watches over state and society. But, because it possesses greater grass-roots legitimacy, the Cuban state may be better able to enlist the populace itself in assuring political conformity and societal control.<sup>30</sup> This is accomplished through such mass organizations as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, with their 5.2 million members, that operate as neighborhood surveillance organs; the Party-led Territorial Troop Militia, which has placed 1.5 million of the population under arms and paramilitary discipline; and the Cuban Confederation of Labor, with over 2 million members. Self-circumscribed behavior and the pervasive climate of interpersonal mistrust discourage organized opposition to the regime, whether in such key institutions as the army or in society at large. Moreover, the regime's constant efforts to fuse state and society have prevented the emergence of the kinds of small, autonomous nongovernment organizations that elsewhere have contributed to the emergence of a "civil society."

### Social Support and Popular Resiliency

Growing deprivations, the lifestyles of a relatively privileged political class, and remnants of racial discrimination that limit the upward mobility of Afro-Cubans have probably eroded some of the original basis of the regime's social support.<sup>31</sup> Yet a large part of Cuba's lower class, among them blacks and mulattoes who now comprise upwards of 50 percent of the population, recognize that they have been the social beneficiaries of the revolution. The social basis of political support for Castro's regime remains strong among elements of this lower class, especially older age groups and Afro-Cubans. They welcome the regime's policies that have aimed at reducing racial discrimination, maintaining full employment, redistributing wealth, providing free access to health services and education, and creating a sense of popular empowerment, if only symbolically.

<sup>30</sup>Nonetheless, where even East European systems rested on dubious legitimacy, as in the case of the German Democratic Republic, they frequently were capable of penetrating deeply into society through a pervasive system of informers. See Stephen Kinzer, "East Germans Face Their Accusers," *The New York Times Magazine*, April 12, 1992.

<sup>31</sup>Thus, the majority of the *balseros* who have succeeded in crossing the Florida Straits not only are young males but also come predominantly from the lower class, and they are black and mulatto as well as white.

Even though the island's economy has deteriorated, Cubans of all classes have proved themselves extraordinarily resilient in the face of hardship and adversity over the past three decades. They have shown remarkable patience and a knack for improvising and making do within an economy of permanent scarcities. Meanwhile, Castro and the media constantly remind Cubans of the poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic ills afflicting the rest of Latin America, and of the dire consequences that could befall them if the regime is replaced.

### **An Embryonic Opposition**

The Castro regime does not face an organized mass opposition movement like Solidarity in Poland, nor a strong, independent Catholic Church as in both Poland and Nicaragua. Internal opposition has been effectively suppressed or siphoned off through a steady exodus of exiles from the island, with the result that roughly one of ten Cubans (including their offspring) presently lives abroad. Out-migration is expected to increase: in February 1991, Castro lowered the age limit of Cubans wishing to go abroad from 50 for women and 55 for men to 35 for women and 40 for men; and he has hinted that he may drop the age limit to 18 for Cubans applying for foreign visas. Such an easing of emigration restrictions dissipates discontent on the island, creates disincentives for Cubans to rebel, and further weakens the human-rights and dissident groups that exist but are divided and persecuted by the regime.

### **External Scapegoating and Negative Examples**

The economic upheavals taking place in the former socialist bloc work to Castro's advantage in two ways: First, the deprivations that Cubans are experiencing can be blamed, once again, on events beyond the regime's control. Second, the fact that most of the erstwhile socialist states are undergoing painful adjustments as they move toward market-oriented economies, and that perestroika and "shock therapy" have led to economic chaos, consumer goods shortages, and soaring prices in Russia today, all strengthen Castro's hand in rejecting a market economy for Cuba.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>For example, Castro told a mass gathering of children and youth, "You are already witnessing what those countries which used to call themselves socialist are now going through: millions of unemployed, inequality, injustice. They were offered miracles . . . and what they got instead is the other side of the coin." *Granma International*, April 14, 1991, p. 5.

### The Right-Wing Exile Threat

The nearby presence of a large community of exiles further distinguishes Castro's Cuba from most of the East European countries. Many Cuban exiles are eager to return to a "liberated Cuba" in order to reclaim their confiscated farms, business firms, and homes, and to regain their lost political power and status. Such a post-Castro prospect looms as a very unattractive alternative to those Cubans on the island who have benefited from the revolution. This is particularly true of Afro-Cubans and mulattoes, for whom both class and race must be critical factors in viewing the predominantly white, rich, right-wing exile leadership in Miami.

The exile threat is amplified by the Miami exile community's most visible and influential leader, Jorge Mas Canosa. Besides heading The Cuban American National Foundation, Mas allegedly wants to be president of a post-Castro Cuba for which his team of advisers has drawn up a draft constitution and economic recovery plan.<sup>33</sup> To jumpstart the economy, for example, Mas proposes to auction off 60 percent of Cuba's nationalized assets, including state enterprises, collectives, and other properties, in the expectation of raising \$15 billion in 15 months.<sup>34</sup> Such a scheme means that wealthy Cuban exiles and foreigners would be the big winners, since only they, and not the islanders themselves, would have the resources necessary to make bids on the auctioned assets.

Thus, two key sectors of the island's population have much to fear from Mas and other right-wing exiles in a post-Castro future. First, at the mass level, are those who have benefited individually and as a social class from the revolution because they received redistributed private property and higher socioeconomic status—among them, many Afro-Cubans who fear that returning exiles would try to turn the clock back to pre-1959 Cuba. Second are the elites who constitute the new political class—the *nomenklatura* and the even larger number of professionals, technocrats, and intellectuals who occupy posi-

<sup>33</sup>Mas is chairman of the supervisory board of Radio and Television Martí, and vehemently opposes any direct "dialogue" with the Castro brothers. But he claims to have met secretly with high-ranking officials of the Castro government in recent years. See William A. Orme, Jr., "The Cuba Thaw," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1991, p. M1. For a less flattering portrait of Mas, who emerges as intolerant, undemocratic, and power hungry, and as another Fidel Castro but on the extreme right, see Newhouse, "A Reporter At Large," pp. 75-83. For a statement of his own position, see Jorge Mas Canosa, "Toward a Future Without Castro: Cuba's Transition to Democracy," *The Heritage Lectures*, February 14, 1992.

<sup>34</sup>Richard Boudreaux, "Can Castro Weather the Storm?" *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1992, p. A8.

tions in the government and various state-supported centers and institutions—who fear retribution by vengeful exiles, or at least displacement by well-heeled, well-trained, and well-connected Cuban-Americans. As a consequence, the threat from Miami enables the *fidelistas* order to draw support from two otherwise disparate if not potentially conflictive sectors of the population.

### Latin American Solidarity

Unlike the East European communist states, Castro's Cuba can draw solidarity and support from within its surrounding region. Latin American governments have always had to be careful not to offend their leftist and ultra-nationalist domestic constituencies in forging their policies toward Castro. Siding with Washington against Havana could raise the likelihood of having to face Cuban-supported insurgencies.<sup>35</sup> Today, as Mark Falcoff has observed, the diminution of Cuban subversion in the hemisphere has made it easier for Latin Americans of different political hues to indulge their admiration for and solidarity with Castro—because of, among other things, his successful defiance of the North Americans, his charismatic presence and caudillistic rule, and his and Cuba's international visibility. Conveniently masking these pro-Castro sympathies, Falcoff adds, is Latin America's penchant for nonintervention in the internal affairs of another country.<sup>36</sup>

Despite a hemisphere-wide redemocratization, Latin American governments will neither abandon the Castro regime nor insist that it introduce democratic and market-oriented reforms. At the Ibero-American summit meeting in Guadalajara in July 1991, some Latin American governments attempted to "save" Fidel from the possibility of an ignominious ending by trying to persuade him to moderate his policies, as well as by calling for Cuba's reincorporation into the

<sup>35</sup>On Cuba's "decision-making rules" as to whether and how to support Latin American and other revolutionary movements, and which ones, see Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1989, pp. 113–146.

<sup>36</sup>According to Falcoff, "even conservative Latins secretly admire the way the Cuban dictator has raised his country—under other circumstances, a rather unimportant Caribbean island—to the status of a quasi-world power. Of course, they know that to accomplish this the Cuban people have had to pay a terrible price, and they wouldn't trade places with them." Mark Falcoff, "Why the Latins Still Love Fidel," *American Enterprise Institute Magazine*, November–December 1990, reprinted in *The Issue is Cuba*, No. 6, March 1991, p. 11.

Western Hemisphere community of nations.<sup>37</sup> Their advice was ignored, as shown by the Fourth Party Congress and the Cuban government's subsequent repression of dissident and human rights groups. No matter what he does, the Cuban caudillo can bank on Latin American support against the United States, as exemplified by private groups in Mexico purchasing and shipping petroleum to oil-strapped Cuba during the spring of 1992. For his part, Castro is certain to continue his strategy of broadening and strengthening Cuba's ties in the region.

Nevertheless, Latin American solidarity will not be enough to save the Cuban economy. Trade between the island and the rest of the region is certain to remain self-limiting in the future: Cuba and most of its Latin neighbors do not have complementary economies; Havana lacks hard currency to pay for its imports; and, as Castro learned at the Ibero-American summit conference in July 1991, Latin America cannot grant Cuba much in the way of needed credits. In the end, Cuba will need to look elsewhere in order to revitalize its economy.

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<sup>37</sup>With Mexico in the lead, these Latin governments may act in much the same way that the long-suffering but loyal and admiring Sancho Panza would always rescue the mad Don Quixote. For further elaboration, see David Ronfeldt, *Draft Chapters on Two Faces of Fidel: Don Quixote and Captain Ahab*, RAND, P-7641, June 1990. For an example of the idolatry toward Castro by leftist Latin American intellectuals, see the panegyric interview of the Cuban leader conducted by the Mexican magazine director, Beatriz Pages Rebollar, in *Siempre*, May 30, 1991.

### **3. THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR 1992 AND BEYOND**

While insisting on strict adherence to socialist principles for the domestic economy, the regime is seeking a way out of the worsening crisis by inviting foreign investors to participate in joint enterprises in a special external sector. Whether this experiment in a bifurcated economy will enable the regime to overcome the present crisis remains problematical. For the short term, the new external sector is not likely to compensate for the expected drop in revenues from the sugar industry, the traditional mainstay of the economy. Moreover, the new sector appears to be generating new socioeconomic contradictions and tensions in Cuban society.

#### **THE NEW EXTERNAL SECTOR: FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN JOINT VENTURES**

With the demise of the socialist bloc, the regime has been forced to adjust its economic strategy. The Cuban government is retaining the socialist system for the internal economy and the sugar industry, but it is also aggressively promoting an autonomous, externally oriented sector of the economy based on foreign participation in petroleum, tourism, biotechnology, and other areas; the goal is to generate hard-currency earnings. The economy is thus becoming bifurcated: the external quasi-capitalist sector is to compete in the global market economy but is sealed off from the internal sector, where neither a market nor privatized economy is permitted.<sup>1</sup>

The primary vehicle for foreign participation is the joint-venture arrangement, in which the Cuban government or a state firm joins with a foreign partner in establishing a joint venture. The foreign partners thus far have been West European investors, largely Spanish but also

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<sup>1</sup>Gillian Gunn claims that the new Cuban strategy involves "the establishment of a few apparently fully private Cuban companies, owned by Cuban shareholders who are considered trustworthy by the Communist Party," and that these firms "act as bridges between the market enclaves and the larger Cuban economy." ("Cuba's Search for Alternatives," *Current History*, February 1992, p. 6.) However, such Cuban firms are not only few in number but are probably found mostly in the foreign trade area, where the regime has set up privately owned Cuban companies to circumvent the U.S. embargo. And they cannot be considered harbingers of a future market economy, since their very existence is contrary to market principles, given that they are chartered companies whose shareholders are hand-picked by the Party.



including French, British, and Scandinavian firms. Canadian, Brazilian, and Mexican investors are also being cultivated. Although the foreign partner traditionally has been limited to 49 percent participation, majority investment may now be granted in certain cases. Joint ventures or other economic arrangements (such as debt equity swaps) are permitted where the Cuban state enterprise needs access to the capital, technology, and marketing network of a foreign investor to develop a new industry. Foreign investment in the sugar industry is thus ruled out, as are activities in the internal sector, unless a proposed joint venture will lead to import substitution and hard-currency savings. The foreign partner is allowed to remit its share of profits overseas, appoint its management personnel, and hire Cuban employees from a pool of selected workers. Although land ownership is not allowed, long-term leases are granted to the foreign investor.

This experiment in a bifurcated economy carries high stakes. Its success or failure may determine the viability of Cuban socialism and the solution to the island's economic crisis. The regime is pinning its hopes on the discovery of offshore petroleum fields as the economy's way out over the long term, while the expansion of the tourist and biotechnology industries offers short- to medium-term solutions, with all three industries resting on attracting foreign capital, technology, and marketing networks.

### **Petroleum Exploration**

Oil exploration and development by Western companies is high on the regime's agenda. The French oil and gas conglomerate, Total-Compagnie Francaise des Petroles, was awarded a major offshore exploration concession near Varadero Beach. In early April, Canadian and Swedish companies were offered offshore concessions north of Matanzas province and south of Camaguey province, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Still other companies, Shell, British Petroleum, and Petrobras, are reportedly also interested. The companies pay a license fee to prospect, bear all the costs of exploration, and, if oil is found and recovered, retain 50 percent of the oil for their exclusive disposal, and they have the right of first refusal regarding Cuba's share. The Cuban state can take its share in petroleum or hard currency.

As of early 1992, Cuban authorities had confirmed the discovery of only a very small oil field in Ciego de Avila province, the output of

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<sup>2</sup>-Cuba: Oil Exploration Concessions Granted to Foreign Companies," Inter Press Service, as posted in electronic form on April 6, 1992, Peacenet.

which (a projected 70,000 metric tons per year) will constitute less than 1 percent of the petroleum imported from the former Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>3</sup> But if commercially viable petroleum deposits are eventually found offshore in sufficient quantity, the island could meet its energy needs and earn hard currency as a net exporter of oil. If Russia ceases to be an oil exporter by 1994 or 1995, as some predict, then the prospect of Cuba becoming self-sufficient in petroleum by the end of the decade, and possibly a major oil exporter, would give the Castro regime a new lease on life.

Even though it would take five to seven years to bring a discovery into production, the very promise of Cuba becoming a major oil producer would free up Western credits and loans to the Cuban government in the interim. The Cuban government would then be in a position to purchase petroleum on the world market, relieve the austere conditions for the Cuban people, and give the population credible hope for a better future.

Whether commercially profitable oil will in fact be found remains to be seen, however. By May 1992, trade sources had reported that Total, the French company, had decided to pull out because its preliminary geological acquisitions analyses had revealed only the presence of asphaltic pockets rather than promising sands in the area off Varadero Beach.<sup>4</sup> Whether Cuba strikes oil will thus depend on the outcome of other explorations.

### **Tourism and Biotechnology**

In the meantime, the tourist industry has become the flagship of the Cuban government's joint venture program. Foreign capital and management from Europe, particularly Spain, are being offered very favorable terms to vastly expand and upgrade the island's tourist facilities. All the joint ventures have concentrated on building luxury five-star hotels and resorts, along with restaurants and nightclubs that are reserved exclusively for foreign tourists. The government

<sup>3</sup>The Ciego de Avila discovery will not add appreciably to Cuba's production of about 800,000 metric tons of heavy crude oil per year.

<sup>4</sup>The Cuban American National Foundation, in its "April 22, 1992 ISSUE BRIEF" (Washington, D.C.), and Enrique Urizar, the energy specialist at the North-South Center, University of Miami, in a telephone conversation with one of the authors on April 24, 1992, reported that Total was pulling out because of concern over the long-term legality of its concession in the event of the demise of the Castro government. However, it is doubtful that legal concerns would drive Total out if preliminary core samples had held out the promise of oil.

plans to double the current number of 15,000 tourist-class hotel rooms by 1995.

The regime claims that the industry attracted 340,000 foreign tourists in 1990 and an estimated 400,000 in 1991, with \$400 million in revenues expected in the latter year.<sup>5</sup> Western business contacts privately report that Cuban authorities are hoping for 500,000 tourists in 1992, primarily from Canada, Germany, and other West European countries, which is down from earlier projections.<sup>6</sup> Still, Cuba is clearly becoming a contender in Caribbean tourism: besides the island's tropical beauty, pristine beaches (including the world-class Varadero Beach), and low crime rate, tourists are offered very attractively priced packages that include round-trip airfare, hotel, and meals.

Biotechnology and pharmaceuticals is the other highly touted new export industry for Cuba. The Center for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering has produced 15 drugs through DNA recombinations since it opened in 1986, including competitively priced interferon for cancer treatment, recombinated vaccine antihepatitis B, and anti-meningococci vaccine type B. The latter reportedly has received export contracts amounting to \$200 million.<sup>7</sup> Joint ventures with foreign firms that combine Cuban discoveries in the biotechnology field with the capital, technology, packaging, and marketing assets of the foreign partner, have already been established in cosmetics.

### Constraints and Problems Affecting the External Sector

The experiment in a special autonomous export sector partially resembles the current Chinese model of modernization in that Cuba, like post-Mao China after 1978, has turned to foreign investors. But the Castro regime has adopted only one facet of the Chinese model in order to preclude the adverse social and political consequences of the Chinese reform process that led to Tiananmen Square, as well as to ensure the purity of Cuban socialism. The external sector is sealed

<sup>5</sup>From a lecture, "Cuba in a Changing Hemisphere," to be pronounced by the Cuban representative to the IVth Europe-Caribbean Conference, sponsored by the West Indian Committee, 1991, p. 5. (Hereafter cited as "Cuba in a Changing Hemisphere.")

<sup>6</sup>Initially, the number of tourists planned for 1992 was 600,000, with revenues of \$420 million. See Ramón Martínez, "El turismo y su destino," *Economía y Desarrollo*, September-October 1988, pp. 30-37; and "El turismo internacional," *Tribuna del Economista*, December 1989, pp. 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>"Cuba in a Changing Hemisphere," p. 5. Another source put all earnings at \$100 million for 1990. Miguel Alejandro Figueras, "Structural Changes in the Cuban Economy," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1991, p. 20.

off from the domestic economy, with no marketization or privatization of agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing permitted as in the Chinese case.<sup>8</sup>

The Cubans are likely to find their experiment with an external sector far less of an economic success than the Chinese model proved to be. They may also encounter some of the same kinds of adverse societal and political side effects that befell China in the mid-to-late 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

The Castro regime is counting on the expanded tourism and biotechnology industries to offset some of the anticipated losses in sugar earnings. The actual earnings from tourism, however, were substantially lower than the \$400 million that Cuban authorities claimed at the end of 1991. That figure represented gross earnings. Net earnings might be but 60 to 70 percent of this, once the hard-currency costs of imported petroleum, intermediate and consumer goods, and foodstuffs required to service the needs of Western tourists are deducted from revenues. Meanwhile, competition from more established Caribbean rivals, the less-than-adequate tourist facilities on the island, and the apartheid character of Cuban tourism suggest that Cuba faces other constraints that will serve to further limit earnings over the long term.

Cuba's nascent biotechnology industry also faces major limitations. As with tourism, biotechnology export earnings are reduced by the need to import equipment and other items from the West, which must be paid for with hard currency. Although Cuba has sold its biotechnology products to the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Third World countries, breaking into hard-currency Western markets remains difficult, despite joint ventures, because of Cuba's unpaid usage of patented Western processes. Unless joint ventures are arranged with major Western corporations, Cuba also lacks the financial resources with which to compete with Western multinationals in a field where the international marketing alone of any new drug costs

<sup>8</sup>Another major difference between the Cuban and Chinese models is the part played by offshore Chinese: they play a pivotal role in the investment, technology, marketing, banking, and other economic activities taking place in mainland China, a role that neither the Castro regime nor the Cuban exile community wishes to see replicated in Cuba today.

<sup>9</sup>On the economic, political, and social dimensions of the Chinese case, see the chapters in Richard Baum (ed.), *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen*, Routledge, New York, 1991.

at least \$150 million, according to a Bayer executive who was consulted by Cuba's Ministry of Health.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the privileged character of the special external sector is intensifying the inequalities and socioeconomic contradictions in Cuban society. Apartheid tourism has led to the creation of exclusive enclaves in Havana, Varadero, and other resort areas, where foreigners enjoy fine hotels, restaurants, and other facilities that are denied to Cubans. In some areas, farms are dedicated exclusively to supplying the fruits, vegetables, and other foodstuffs for tourist hotels, at a time when the Cuban population is experiencing increased shortages and rationing of food items. Ordinary Cubans are further becoming second-class citizens in their own country because they must conform to "socialist principles," whereas foreign investors are permitted to engage in capitalist practices. As a consequence, the regime runs the risk of exacerbating nationalist sentiment much as Batista did when he opened up the island to an infusion of American capital and tourists during the 1950s.

Divisions are not limited to nationals versus foreigners, however. Cubans employed in joint enterprises receive higher wages than workers in national firms, and they are becoming a relatively privileged sector of society. Workers in the tourist and biotechnology industries have access to good food and other amenities not available to the ordinary worker, while specialists, technicians, and management personnel in the biotechnical field also enjoy better housing. Employees chosen for the labor pool used by the tourist industry may owe their selection not to merit as workers but to their political reliability and connections. These societal contradictions—between foreigners and Cubans, and among Cubans—undermine the regime's claim of ensuring that austerity is equitably shared. They are likely to sharpen if the economic situation deteriorates further.

### ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR 1992 AND BEYOND

Complete and reliable data are lacking on Cuba's economy. But Carmelo Mesa-Lago, an economist who has long been a leading critic of the regime, has calculated that Cuba's GNP declined by 9 percent

<sup>10</sup>The Bayer executive further noted that Cuba's "scarce resources are not too well spent in this field," but his warnings were ignored by the Cubans because of Castro's insistence on challenging the First World in this new high-tech area. *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1991, p. 4.

in 1991, following a 7 percent decline the previous year.<sup>11</sup> Andrew Zimbalist, a leftist economist with contacts to the regime, predicts that the economy will contract another 7 to 12 percent in 1992, but will then start expanding.<sup>12</sup> Zimbalist's optimism appears to be based on a best-case scenario, however. The more probable scenario is that the economic downturn will continue beyond 1992 because of the small sugar crop that is expected this year and next, the closed character of the international market, the economic problems of the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Cuba's limited ability to pay or barter for needed imports, including petroleum.

### Cuban Sugar: Bittersweet Outlook

It is clear that the Cuban economy is continuing to slow down in 1992 due to shortages of imported fuel and other inputs, while the scarcities of foodstuffs and consumer articles may be undermining the morale of the labor force. Cuba's critical sugar industry has been affected by these and other adverse factors. Thus, the harvesting of the 1992 sugar crop did not begin in November or December, as has been customary in the past; the belated harvesting that began in January evidently started at reduced levels.<sup>13</sup> Since then, adverse weather, the use of voluntary but unskilled *macheteros* (cane-cutters), and delays in obtaining Soviet fuel, lubricants, and spare parts have diminished cane yields, obliging the government to extend the harvest period to July.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier in the year, outside sugar experts had predicted that Cuba's 1992 harvest would be no higher than 6.5 million metric tons, and perhaps as low as 5 million.<sup>15</sup> In May, the Cuban Sugar Minister conceded that the harvest would be inside the range of 5.5 million to 7

<sup>11</sup>Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Is There Life After the USSR?" *Hemisfile*, January 1992, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>As reported by Richard Boudreaux, "Can Castro Weather the Storm," *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1992, p. A8. However, in an article completed earlier, Zimbalist by no means minimized the severity of Cuba's economic crisis and outlook. See Andrew Zimbalist, "Teetering on the Brink: Cuba's Current Economic and Political Crisis," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, May 1992, pp. 407-418.

<sup>13</sup>*Cuba Business*, February 1992, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>"Cuban Government Calls on People to Save Harvest," May 4, 1992, Notimex Mexican News Service; and "Cuba Seeks to Diversify Sugar Industry and Markets," May 7, 1992, The Reuter Library Report.

<sup>15</sup>*Cuba Business*, February 1992, p. 2; and *La Sociedad Economica* (London), Bulletin 13, p. 1 (hereafter cited as *La Sociedad Economica*). The latter is devoted entirely to "Cuba & Sugar: Looking to the Future," a Report on the Seminar Sponsored by La Sociedad Economica, Dominican Republic, February 2-6, 1992.

million metric tons. In the meantime, sugar prices on the world market remain depressed, having dropped to below eight cents per pound in early 1992. According to Castro's speech to the Fourth Party Congress, Cuba would receive only \$190 per ton for its sugar sales to Russia, compared to the \$800 per ton it used to receive under the accords with the USSR.

Even if the 1992 harvest reaches 6.5 million metric tons, Cuba will have difficulty marketing its sugar exports because there is only a small "international market" for sugar. Nearly 75 percent of the world's sugar production is for local consumption and is sold by domestic producers at high subsidized price levels. The international market, accounting for about 24 percent of the sugar sold in 1991, consists of different national or supranational political entities such as the United States, the European Economic Community, the former Soviet bloc, etc. In these markets, the outside sugar-producing country receives a preferential price based on a negotiated contract or agreement, as was the case between Cuba and the Soviet Union in prior years. The so-called "world market" therefore becomes a residual market, making up less than 2 percent of sugar sales at the current price of eight cents per pound, which, according to Western experts, does not cover the average costs of production of any sugar-exporting country.<sup>16</sup>

Cuba once had a secure international market in the Soviet Union and, to a lesser degree, Eastern Europe, where it sold the lion's share of its sugar exports under preferential pricing arrangements from the early 1960s onwards. But in 1990, Cuba lost its East European market, which had accounted for about 1 million metric tons. Then, even though its five-year trade agreement with the Soviet Union expired at the end of 1990, Cuba still had the Soviet market. Under the one-year Soviet-Cuban trade agreement for 1991, Cuba continued to receive a preferential price of about 24 cents per pound for its sugar, with the USSR to purchase 4 million metric tons in exchange for 10 million metric tons of petroleum and other products.<sup>17</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, however, Cuba lost its primary international market and is now scrambling to find new international markets for 1992 and beyond.

<sup>16</sup>*La Sociedad Economica*, Bulletin 13, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>As was noted earlier, the Soviets delivered only 8.7 million metric tons of oil in 1991, while the shortfalls in other Soviet exports to Cuba were even greater. As of September 1991, Cuba had shipped 3.7 million metric tons of sugar to the USSR.

According to a group of U.S. government and private-sector experts that met in February 1992, Cuba's sales could be limited by the fact that it exports principally *raw* sugar, whereas refined white sugar makes up almost 50 percent of the world's sugar trade. Their maximum estimate of projected sales of "Cuban raws" in 1992 is about 5 million metric tons, distributed as shown in Table 1.

But the numbers in the table are the group's best-case estimate, since "Cuba's Far Eastern markets are threatened by cheaper freight rates from Thai and Australian sugar producers (around US \$23 per ton below what Cuba can offer). The North African markets are also threatened by subsidized European exports of refined sugar."<sup>18</sup>

The most important future market for Cuban raws thus remains the Commonwealth of Independent States, where upwards of 2 million metric tons could conceivably be sold.<sup>19</sup> Early in 1992, Russia had agreed to purchase 500,000 metric tons in exchange for oil, with an option to buy another 500,000 during the first half of the year; Kazakhstan would purchase 200,000, and Latvia 50,000.<sup>20</sup> In May, however, the Russian sugar-purchasing agency's president, Sergei Barykin, informed Reuters that there were "no prospects" that Russia would renew the agreement and buy additional sugar from Cuba beyond the initial one million metric tons, "because we do not need raw sugar for the second half of the year."<sup>21</sup> Hence, it appears doubtful that the CIS market can in fact reach the 2 million metric tons projected in Table 1.

The outlook for the CIS market is further dimmed by the likelihood that falling production levels in virtually all the former Soviet republics is certain to hinder their export capabilities. This particularly applies to Russia, whose continuing drop in petroleum production has obliged it to limit sugar imports and to use its oil exports to obtain higher-priority Western goods and technology. Thus, Barykin ac-

<sup>18</sup>*La Sociedad Economica*, Bulletin 13, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>The projected sale of 2 million metric tons to the CIS is two million less than had been contracted for in 1991, when the Soviet Union existed. One of the chief reasons why the former constituent parts of the old USSR are likely to scale down their sugar imports considerably is that it is principally Russia that has oil to sell in exchange for sugar, whereas many of the other former Soviet republics will be limited by what they can offer Cuba, or, as in the case of Ukraine, they will not need to import sugar.

<sup>20</sup>*Financial Times*, February 11, 1992.

<sup>21</sup>Barykin explained that Russia's sugar refineries would be processing its own sugar beet harvest. Pascal Fletcher, "Russia Will Not Seek Cuban Sugar for Second Half of 1992," *The Reuter Library Report*, May 7, 1992.



**Table 1**  
**Projected Cuban Sugar Sales in 1992**

Market	Metric Tons
Canada	300,000
China	1,000,000
Japan	300,000
South Korea	250,000
Iran	240,000
Former USSR	2,000,000
Algeria	250,000
Egypt	250,000
Miscellaneous sales	500,000

knowledgeed that the sugar-oil exchange was being adversely affected by problems in the Russian oil industry, "which is not in the best of conditions." As a consequence, "shortages of oil can mean that we cannot pick up the whole quantity of sugar."<sup>22</sup>

Cuba has been searching for alternative oil suppliers. In early 1992, it appeared that Cuba would sign some type of sugar-oil barter agreement with Iran. But the Iranians reportedly wanted a letter of credit from Cuba, which the latter was unable to supply, and as of mid-May there was still no official announcement that a barter agreement had been signed between the two countries. In any event, the amount of petroleum that Cuba will be able to import from Iran or other oil exporters will depend on the size of its sugar harvest and inventories, and on the price of oil—that has begun to rise on the world market.

All in all, therefore, the island's economic contraction appears certain to continue beyond 1992. Cuba faces limitations in the CIS and other international markets. Its sugar harvest at best is not likely to top 6.5 million metric tons, and unless Castro has kept sizable inventories in reserve, its sugar exports are also likely to be held down. The outlook may be even worse for 1993 and 1994; in trying to obtain the maximum possible sugar crop this year, the regime is extending the harvest season by cutting and grinding sugar cane that should be left for subsequent harvests.

<sup>22</sup>Fletcher, "Russia Will Not Seek Cuban Sugar for the Second Half of 1992."

#### **4. PROSPECTS FOR REGIME CONTINUITY OR BREAKDOWN**

The absence of reform, the grim outlook for the economy, and growing privations are eroding societal support for the regime. Cubans no longer just complain about conditions; they are beginning to openly criticize their government, including Fidel Castro—a phenomenon unheard of in the past. For its part, the regime retains a viselike grip on society and is quite prepared to engage in whatever repression is necessary to safeguard its survival.

The regime appears to possess sufficient legitimacy and control mechanisms to remain in power even if the economy worsens during the remainder of 1992. But if the economic downslide continues well into the next year, the regime could begin to face serious unrest. If this occurs, the issue is whether pressures for system change may come from below by an invigorated "civil society," or from above by reformist elements within the regime itself. At this point in time (mid-1992), neither of these alternatives seems likely as long as Castro remains in power. This may increase the prospect that if and when change does come later in the 1990s, it is likely to be more violent and less controlled than was the case in the Soviet Union or most of the East European states.

##### **A WEAK CIVIL SOCIETY**

Today, political dissent in Cuba is more prevalent than it has been at any time since the 1960s. Recent, knowledgeable visitors to the island report that people are becoming "braver" in their behavior. More and more Cubans are openly criticizing the regime and Castro; they are also refusing to participate in "acts of repudiation" against dissidents and other "antirevolutionary" elements. Additionally, many Cubans are engaging in "antisocial" and "deviant" behavior through increased participation in the "second economy" of underground capitalist-style activities that the state has been unable to stamp out or control as the economic situation worsens.

Nevertheless, except for the nuclear and extended family and other small entities or networks, a civil society that is independent of the state remains in its infancy in Cuba. Only recently have some organized elements of a civil society begun to emerge that are institutionally autonomous from the state. Unlike the East European and So-

viet cases, however, they have yet to form the basis of a "political society" that can engage in independent action and challenge the state.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Fractious and Repressed Opposition**

One indication that a civil society is beginning to emerge is that 50 human-rights and dissident groups had surfaced in Cuba by early 1992, most of which have sought legal status from the Ministry of Justice. A few date back to the mid-1970s or mid-1980s, but most sprang up after 1989.<sup>2</sup> Of the 50 groups, some 20 concentrate on defending human rights and creating political space within the existing system. The remaining 30 have avowedly political intentions, with most calling for peaceful change through internal regime reform, national reconciliation, free elections, and other similar measures. About 20 groups are affiliated with one of the two umbrella organizations formed by Cuban exiles in the United States and Spain—either the conservative "Coalition" led by The Cuban American National Foundation, or the "Convergence" formed under Liberal and Social Democratic party leadership.

The proliferation of human-rights and dissident groups in Cuba is reminiscent of what occurred in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union in the 1980s. The emergence of groups that were not state-sponsored or sanctioned signaled the weakening of the communist regimes in those countries. As their presence grew exponentially in the late 1980s, fueled in part by Western recognition and support, these groups strengthened and emboldened other elements in civil society. They formed a political opposi-

<sup>1</sup>On the role of civil society in the transition and collapse of communist systems, see Andrew Arato, "Social Theory, Civil Society, and the Transformation of Authoritarian Socialism," in Andrew Arato and Ferenc Feher (eds.), *Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New York, 1991; Grzegorz Ekiert, "Democratic Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Consideration," *British Journal of Political Science*, July 1991; Janina Fretzel-Zagorska, "Civil Society in Poland and Hungary," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4, December 1990; and Radmila Nakrada, "Democratic Alternatives: A Perspective from Eastern Europe," *Alternatives*, No. 16, 1991.

<sup>2</sup>Among the oldest and best known are the Cuban Committee for Human Rights (founded 1976), led by Gustavo Arcos Bergnes, and the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation (1987), led by Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz. More recently formed groups gaining visibility that have more explicit political aims include the Alternative Criteria (1990), formed by the since-imprisoned María Elena Cruz Varela and eleven other intellectuals with a social democratic orientation; the Harmony Movement (1990), which calls for direct elections under a multiparty system; and the clandestine Martiana (after Martí) Association of Opposition to the Regime (1991), which claims to be working within the regime to head off a civil war.

tion that confronted the debilitated state and accelerated the terminal crisis of communist government. Hence, they helped promote system change in three ways: from below, through strong opposition movements, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia; from above, by supporting regime-led change, as in Hungary and Bulgaria; or through a combination of regime- and society-led change, as in the Soviet Union and, more violently, in Romania.<sup>3</sup>

Cuba's 50-odd groups may yet form the basis of a civilian-based opposition to the Castro government. But they have a long way to go before they pose a serious challenge. Indeed, it is possible that some are creatures of the regime itself, or manipulated by it, in order to echo the government's call for the lifting of the U.S. embargo or to flush out opponents of the regime. In any event, at present these groups remain small, fractious, and, in several instances, highly individualized.

To become a critical mass, Cuba's dissident and human-rights groups will need to overcome collective-action problems that are risky for individuals confronting strong, repressive states. In an authoritarian or totalitarian society, some individuals may be brave enough to step forward and try to forge an opposition movement; this has begun to happen in Cuba. A few other individuals may join, but the likelihood is that most people will wait for others to challenge the government, refusing to commit themselves to the opposition until they become convinced of the government's unraveling or that there is a viable alternative to the regime.

The Castro regime has not reached that critical moment of weakness. On the contrary, it has succeeded in repressing and hemming in the human-rights and dissident groups in order to head off a Tiananmen Square-like incident in Cuba. There are also some indications that it is targeting its repression. It has hit hardest at dissident leaders and groups that might have the broadest appeal among both internal elites and the popular masses, principally those having a social democratic orientation, while easing up on those with connections to more

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<sup>3</sup>See Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Diversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*, Random House, New York, 1989; J. F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom—The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1991; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure—The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, Scribner's, New York, 1989. On a more philosophical plane concerning the resiliency of civil society in the face of a seemingly strong (but weak) state, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.

conservative exile circles in Miami, as well as those working within the law.

### A Submissive and Subordinate Civil Society

Civil society has never been strong in Cuba. Prior to 1959, a series of prolonged dictatorships, widespread public corruption, and a discredited political class, along with an externally dependent economy, severely debilitated Cuba's institutions, classes, and groups. The weakness of civil society before the Cuban revolution facilitated the rapid imposition of Castro's dictatorship and the communist transformation that followed.<sup>4</sup>

Today, after more than three decades of *fidelista* rule, and the departure of over one million Cuban-born exiles and their offspring, the Cuban economy, polity, and society have been structurally altered to assure their submissiveness to the state:

- There is no private sector to speak of in Cuba's command economy, other than the estimated 160,000 private farmers who tenuously cling to small private landholdings that are gradually being incorporated into government-sponsored cooperatives.
- There are no strong autonomous institutions standing apart from the state: Cuba's Catholic Church has long been cowed, unlike its counterparts in communist Poland, Pinochet's Chile, and Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, or the Protestant Church in the GDR; and neither an independent labor movement nor opposition political parties or movements exist in Cuba, unlike in Poland, Chile, and Nicaragua.
- As of yet, no strong alternative leaders have emerged to compete with Castro for the support and loyalty of the Cuban population.

As in the model of totalitarian systems, Cuban society remains relatively atomized and without the institutional or collective means to confront the state.<sup>5</sup> The regime may try to bill certain new organiza-

<sup>4</sup>See Hugh Thomas, *Cuba—The Pursuit of Freedom*, Harper & Row, New York, 1971; Edward Gonzalez, *Cuba Under Castro: The Limits of Charisma*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1974; and Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1978.

<sup>5</sup>Juan del Aguila points out that "the very idea of challenging the system and removing its leaders is probably alien to a society increasingly obsessed with little more than sheer survival. . . . No redemptive impulse is felt because the notion of a radical new future is inconceivable, even if the ubiquitous dreariness of the present cries out

tions as being independent and nongovernmental—e.g., the companies chartered to work with foreign investors, and some recently formed institutions and research centers like CINA 2000, the Center for Study and Research on International Security—but they are creatures of the state.

In the meantime, Cubans must occupy themselves with trying to obtain the bare necessities of life—ranging from increasingly scarce clothing to soap, medicines, and food—from one day to the next. Having little time for politics under these circumstances, some may blame the system for the extreme privations they must endure, but few are likely to have the energy, will, and courage to try to change or overthrow the regime. Cuba's youth have taken up rebellion at critical moments in the 19th and 20th centuries, but they appear too apolitical, atomized, or controlled by regime organs to assume this historic role at present. Until the visible decomposition of the regime sets in, and utter despair becomes widespread, Cubans can be expected to resist Castro's disciplined totalitarian state passively rather than actively.

### **CUBA'S STRONG STATE**

In contrast to civil society, the Cuban state remains strong. So far, the Castro regime has survived the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the drastic reduction in trade that followed. This feat alone suggests that Cuba is different in several respects from the East European regimes that quickly folded once active Soviet support was withdrawn. As discussed at length earlier:

- The Cuban state has nationalist legitimacy for many Cubans independently of any external sources of support, in contrast to the former East European satellite states.
- The Cuban state is led by a strong patriarchal leader who personifies the revolution, possesses moral authority in the eyes of much of the population, and is still capable of generating mass support and loyalty, unlike the aged if not enfeebled Kádars, Honeckers, Husaks, Zhivkovs, and Ceausescus of Eastern Europe.
- The Cuban state is supported from within the regime and in society at large by many first-generation revolutionaries who retain their ideological commitment and fervor.

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for new departures." "Why Communism Hangs on in Cuba," *Global Affairs*, Winter 1991, p. 102.

- The Cuban state rests on disciplined cadres in the Party, Army, security organs, and mass organizations, all of which have a strong stake in the existing political-economic order.
- The regime retains a social basis of support among those who have been the principal beneficiaries of revolutionary change, the most important being older sectors of the population and Afro-Cubans and mulattoes of all ages, who comprise roughly half the population.

Indeed, as was suggested earlier, the racial factor may be the regime's trump card because most Cubans of African ancestry are certain to see the predominantly white, right-wing exile leadership in Florida as a threat to their socioeconomic advances, were the exiles to return to power.

The strength of the Cuban state should not be overstated, however. When the true sentiment of a population remains unknown, what appears to be a strong state may turn out to be a "brittle state"—as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The fact that after three decades the Castro regime has been unable to stamp out the underground economy and other forms of societal deviation, or to mold youth into a new revolutionary generation, shows that there are limits to the state's control over society. Moreover, the semblance of strength is magnified when Cubans feign support for the regime out of prudence or for lack of attractive, feasible alternatives. Nonetheless, deviant behavior and private antiregime sentiments do not in themselves constitute a civil society, much less a political society that is capable of opposing the institutional and coercive powers of the Cuban state.

### THE MILITARY-SECURITY APPARATUS

Of all the state institutions, the military and security organs remain most critical to the present and future survival of the regime. The Castro brothers have ensured their personal control over these organs of state through appointment of loyal *fidelista* and *raulista* officers in both the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior. Civilian control of the military was furthered through the professionalization of the FAR under Soviet tutelage. The FAR is thus unlike most other Latin American armies, which have repeatedly seized power or otherwise asserted themselves as major political arbiters and contenders. The more relevant model may well be the former East European military establishments under communist rule.

In Eastern Europe, the military generally deferred to Communist Party authority, stayed out of politics, and played no active role in the transition from communist to democratic rule in 1989. The major exceptions were Poland, where the Polish Communist Party could no longer rule and General Wojciech Jaruzelski took over by imposing emergency rule in 1981; and Romania, where the army joined the populace in what appears to have been a prearranged coup by forces within the state at the end of 1989. With the execution of Division General Ochoa in 1989, there appear to be no Cuban generals capable of playing Jaruzelski's role; they are all bound to the Castro brothers by personal, revolutionary, and professional ties that date back to the 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

For Cuba to follow the example of the Romanian military would require that lower-ranking Cuban officers break with the generals and join with anti-Castro civilian elements within the regime. There are grounds for disaffection within the military, and in time they could grow:

- The Ochoa trial ended with the execution of Cuba's most distinguished and popular general on what may have been phony or at least inflated charges after Castro had stripped him of his personal honor and professional reputation during the court martial and Council of State proceedings.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>This includes Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra—a long-time *raulista* loyalist, who was appointed by Castro to be the new Minister of Interior in the wake of the Ochoa affair—who has the reputation of being a leading hardliner within the regime.

<sup>7</sup>Ochoa was found guilty of money laundering, profiteering, and drug smuggling; his reputation as a soldier was trashed by Castro in his Council of State speech, in which he denied clemency for his former comrade-in-arms. Ochoa was discredited in part because he was linked to the drug operations of MININT Colonel Antonio de la Guardia, who was also executed along with Ochoa and two subordinates on July 13.

Having acted as an agent of the Cuban state, de la Guardia evidently became a scapegoat for the government's policy of allowing Cuba's airfields, territorial waters, and air space to be used by drug traffickers. Once safely in exile, de la Guardia's daughter maintained that he had only been carrying out orders from the two Castro brothers, and that "neither my father nor any of the accused had enough rank to control Cuban airspace and coasts behind Fidel's back." She claimed that during the trial, "Fidel told him the revolution was in peril, that he had to bear responsibility for everything, that he could not mention any higher ups, that everything should remain in the family, and not to worry because everything would work itself out later." *FBIS-LAT-92-005*, January 8, 1992, p. 1. On the other hand, given his solid personal and professional reputation, Ochoa's alleged involvement in drug-related activities does not ring true; in fact, the drug charge was added several days after his arrest. In his long, rambling, and extemporaneous June 14, 1989, speech explaining Ochoa's arrest before a military audience, Raúl Castro criticized Ochoa for joking during serious discussions, for telling dirty jokes, for "violations and irregularities" in carrying out his duties, and



- With the completion of the staged withdrawal of some 50,000 Cuban troops from Angola in May 1991, following the withdrawal of 1600 troops from the Congo a month earlier, the Cuban military is left without an international mission, something that gave the FAR worldwide and domestic prestige.
- With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the FAR no longer has a powerful international patron that can supply it with the weapon systems, advice, training, and fuel to remain a combat-ready, professionalized force.
- With the termination of its overseas military mission and loss of Soviet support, the FAR has been obliged to downsize its forces and suffer budget cuts, and (more galling still) to use its regular troops for agricultural work during the "Special Period in Time of Peace."

In addition to these professional troubles, officers and enlisted men alike may also worry increasingly about the worsening state of the island economy and its toll on civilian relatives and friends.

However, the Castro brothers have moved to offset some of these factors in order to assure the continued loyalty of the FAR. Thus, following the trial of General Ochoa and MININT Colonel Antonio de la Guardia in June 1989, the Minister of Interior was replaced by Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, which led to the wholesale displacement of high-ranking MININT officers by army officers. The longstanding institutional rivalry between the FAR and MININT was thus settled with the FAR extending its domain. Subsequently, the representation of the FAR in the Political Bureau was increased by one additional member at the Party Congress last October, which may have reflected the continuing importance of the FAR as well as a co-optive move by Castro.<sup>8</sup> Since then, the FAR is being kept busy as a military organization, training and exercising to repel a U.S. aggression that the regime insists is all the more likely to occur in a unipolar world.

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for "serious moral flaws," but not once did he allude to drug trafficking. Not surprisingly, Raúl's June 14 speech was omitted from the Cuban government's book on the Ochoa trial, *Case 1/1989: End of the Cuban Connection*, which included his June 25 report to the Court of Honor that reflected the official line on the alleged drug connection.

<sup>8</sup>On the other hand, the number of FAR personnel selected for membership in the new Central Committee of 220 members dropped to only 25 officers, of whom six were now affiliated with MININT. This was a substantial drop from the 44 officers named to the 225-member Central Committee (including alternates) by the Third Party Congress in 1986, and could be interpreted as reflecting the declining influence of the FAR as an institution.

Meanwhile, the Party, military counterintelligence, and MININT remain deeply embedded in the ranks of the officer corps. This makes an anti-Castro military plot extremely difficult beyond a small group of conspirators, thereby minimizing chances that the FAR as an institution may turn against the regime. For the time being, therefore, the Romanian route seems a remote possibility unless and until Cuba's internal economic and political situation turns far more critical.

### AN INTRANSIGENT LEADERSHIP STAYS THE COURSE

The Castro brothers and their hardline followers have blocked the possibility of political and economic liberalization from above. Their intransigence undoubtedly stems less from ideological considerations than from power calculations. At a time when Cuba is experiencing its most severe crisis, they know from the experiences of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that the "decompression" of the Cuban system could lead to its unraveling.

There is a peculiarly "Cuban" dimension underlying the regime's intransigence. Cuban political culture, particularly among revolutionary intellectuals and leaders, values the tradition of "resistance and struggle" epitomized by Cuba's revered martyr, José Martí, by other leaders for independence, and by Castro himself, in which the concept of bravery verges on suicidal.<sup>9</sup> Such a heroic model makes it imperative that the regime resist fundamental system change at all costs—a posture symbolized in December 1989 when Castro changed Cuba's traditional revolutionary slogan from "*Patria o Muerte!*" (Fatherland or Death!) to "*Socialismo o Muerte!*" (Socialism or Death!).

<sup>9</sup>The preeminent civilian leader of Cuba's War of Independence, Martí was killed in battle on May 19, 1895, a month and a half after returning to the island to participate in the guerrilla struggle against the Spanish forces. But as one Cuban has lamented, "[General] Antonio Maceo was also to die in battle after Martí. . . . How many of the great figures of the wars of independence in this hemisphere died in battle? Not one. . . . We Cubans lost Céspedes and Agramonte in The Ten Years' War [of 1868–78], and Martí and Maceo in the War of 1895. . . . Our tradition of heroic deaths has cost our country dearly." Roberto Luque Escalona, *The Tiger and the Children: Fidel Castro and the Judgement of History*, Freedom House and Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New York, 1992, p. 31.

Castro has also exhibited the heroic if not suicidal tendency by assaulting the Moncada Barracks in July 1953, announcing beforehand his landing on the island to resume the anti-Batista struggle in late 1956, and calling for Soviet nuclear retaliation against the United States during the October 1962 missile crisis. Eleven years later, he ordered his vastly outnumbered armed workers and military personnel on Grenada to fight to the death against U.S. invasion forces.

### **Affirming the Hard Line: The Aldana Speech**

That the regime is prepared to dig in and give no quarter was made clear by Politburo member Carlos Aldana in a hard-hitting speech to the National Assembly of People's Power on December 27, 1991. The tone and content of Aldana's speech are significant because, until then, he had been considered by some Western observers to be one of the more liberal elements within Castro's inner circle, a potential reformist within the regime. Aligning himself with the Minister of Interior, Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, Aldana announced that the regime would not tolerate dissidence, much less any form of organized political opposition. He demanded model behavior from its cadres and officials.

Aldana attacked the dissident and human-rights groups as "squalid, counterrevolutionary garbage" who lacked any social or class base and were connected to the outside exile community and the CIA. Among those singled out was María Elena Cruz Varela, the dissident poet, who he claimed had been diagnosed as suffering from "hysterical neurosis." He defended as "noble" the mob action against her by regime loyalists.

But Aldana did not limit himself to dissident elements. He sharply criticized "soft parts [in Cuban society] who have become even more resentful under the conditions in which we are living" and who constitute "potential participants in counterrevolutionary activities." He charged that "the enemy is not foreign to our soft spots" and "works on those soft spots which it knows are susceptible to certain influences and pressures, seeking to open those cracks and that breach among us." The soft parts of society consisted of not only "the anti-proletarian lumpen," but also sectors among "our middle classes" in the Party and government "who have everything," and who "question our policies . . . our line, because they measure the situation according to their own well-being . . . from a petty bourgeois point of view."

To counter such politically corrosive influences, Aldana insisted that "truly exemplary behavior" was required of all cadres and officials as never before, owing to the severity of Cuba's economic contraction:

The population's perception of any kind of inequality, any kind of privilege, any kind of perquisite, any kind of ostentation, will and understandably become that much sharper under the conditions we are experiencing and will presumably experience in the future, given the difficulties we are confronting.

But the requisite behavior also required ideological correctness, and thus the ruling out of reformist tendencies.

In what was clearly a *mea culpa*, Aldana acknowledged that "more than a few comrades of ours became perestroika fans and Gorbachev fans" in the 1987-1989 period, himself included, because it seemed that "socialism in fact needed to be renewed" through perestroika. He credited Castro for saving Cuba from pursuing such an ill-fated course:

I must say, in the name of the strictest truth, that if today we can talk about saving the nation, the revolution, and socialism, it is because we escaped that confusion. . . . [And] if we escaped that confusion, we owe it to you, Comrade Fidel.

Aldana lashed out at those who still lacked "the intellectual honesty and moral courage to acknowledge they were mistaken" about perestroika. They had failed to heed the "prophetic synthesis" in Castro's July 26, 1989, speech in which he predicted that perestroika would have unraveling effects on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup>

Aldana reaffirmed the hard line in a speech to Cuban journalists on March 14, 1992. He maintained that Cuba was being subjected to "unprecedented propaganda pressures, manipulations, and disinformation" from the United States. For this reason, it was imperative to maintain a militant unswerving course:

There is no political space for fickleness. In these times, if one is a revolutionary . . . one has to be an ardent follower of the government's policies at the highest levels, because we have the truth.

What there is no space for is for an alternative which is not ours, which is not socialism. . . . There is no space whatsoever to frolic with the regime's alternatives.<sup>11</sup>

With these neo-Stalinist speeches, Aldana has disabused observers of any notion or hope that he might assume a major reformist role.

<sup>10</sup>FBIS-LAT-92-003, pp. 1-9.

<sup>11</sup>Short Version (Excerpt) Aldana Speech, as posted in electronic form on March 28, 1992, in the Peacenet Conference "reg.cuba," Institute for Global Communications (IGC).

### Leadership Divisions: The Possibility of Reform from Above?

While the Castro brothers, Aldana, and other hardliners control the Political Bureau and other key organs, it is also clear that the regime is not monolithic. The regime has cleavages that are based on different personal allegiances, institutional affiliations, educational backgrounds, pre-1959 revolutionary affiliations, and generational identifications. Whether singly or in combination, these cleavages produce different policy preferences among leadership elites, even if the policy differences are muted by the regime's insistence on unanimity. Indeed, one of Castro's great skills has been his ability to maintain the cohesion of his regime despite its complexity, including when he has carried out leadership changes. Thus, as was noted earlier, the new Political Bureau is distinguished by an influx of a younger generation of leaders, but they appear fully supportive of the *fidelista* hard line. However, leadership cohesion could begin to crack if the regime's current economic policies prove unsuccessful and political tensions mount.

In Eastern Europe, virtually all the regimes experienced growing divisions between *duros y blandos* (hardliners and reformers) as the leadership tried to cope with worsening economic situations. In Hungary in particular, this enabled technocrats to convince Janos Kadar and the rest of the political leadership that economic liberalization was necessary for the revitalization of the economy. In 1968, the New Economic Mechanism was introduced, the first of several experiments with "market socialism" that aimed at ensuring prosperity. In fits and starts, the reform process deepened over time as the regime discovered—grudgingly in the case of Kadar and other confirmed communists—that it had to emphasize market principles over socialism. In the 1980s, the reform process was bolstered by the emergence of a growing democratic opposition within civil society. Ultimately, this led to Kadar's resignation in 1988, and in the following year to the regime's own efforts to bring about democratization and a market economy.

Could the Hungarian model of liberalization and change from above be replicated in Cuba? As indicated by Aldana, there is a younger generation of political leaders, technocrats, and economists who initially saw themselves as perestroikans and who today yearn for at least some form of economic liberalization within the context of Cuban socialism.

At present these reformers have three sources of external inspiration and support that could help them advance their cause. One is the so-called Group of Three, made up of Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela,

who have been urging Castro to adopt more moderate policies in both the economy and political system. Another source is a small team of left-wing economists in the United States, led by Andrew Zimbalist of Smith College, who, together with their Cuban counterparts, are assessing Cuba's economic crisis and options.<sup>12</sup> The third and most important source of potential support resides in the new external sector, with its foreign participation and autonomous joint enterprises. If the joint enterprises succeed in turning the Cuban economy around, or at least arrest its further decline, the reformers within the regime might be in a position to press for the extension of market-oriented policies and even privatization measures to the domestic and sugar sectors of the economy.

However, a successful external sector could also strengthen the hand of Castro and the hardliners. They would be certain to claim credit for the economy's turnaround; and an easing of austerity could strengthen their basis of popular support and enable them to hold fast against economic and especially political reforms. If, on the other hand, the experiment with the external sector fails and the economic crisis worsens, the divisions within the leadership might well deepen over which economic course to take next—more economic liberalization or a stronger command economy—and which political strategy to pursue—opening up political space or tightening the screws even more.

But notwithstanding the presence of reformers, the Hungarian model is not applicable to Cuba. Castro is not Kadar, much less an increasingly enfeebled Kadar. As long as Castro retains his health and intellectual faculties, he will remain on the scene as Cuba's hands-on caudillo. In fact, during the U.S.-Soviet-Cuban conference on the 1962 missile crisis held in Havana in January 1992, he announced that he would not retire because the economic crisis caused by the collapse of communism had made his leadership all the more indispensable.<sup>13</sup> It would be as much out of character for him to resign or to accept a ceremonial position along the lines of Chairman of the Board as it would be for him to become a champion of democratization and economic liberalization.

<sup>12</sup>Zimbalist leads a team sponsored by the Latin American Studies Association. He is scheduled as a featured speaker at a three-day conference for U.S. businessmen, to be held in Cancún and Havana in June 1992, that will explore business opportunities in Cuba's new external sector.

<sup>13</sup>John Newhouse, "A Reporter At Large—Socialism or Death," *The New Yorker*, April 27, 1992, p. 57.

Castro's continued presence for the foreseeable future not only affects Cuba and its people. It means that the United States will continue to confront an intransigent, hostile leader on the island. He may currently be pursuing a more moderate, "pragmatic" course in his international behavior. But he could also become desperate and dangerous if Cuba's internal situation becomes more critical.

## **5. POSSIBLE CUBAN CHALLENGES TO THE UNITED STATES**

After surviving more than 33 years in a hostile environment, the defiant Castro is not inclined to cave in and accommodate a "new world order." He has been obliged to be more pragmatic in order to attract foreign investments as a way out of his economic predicament. But his desperate need for hard currency, together with his hatred for the United States, is likely to see him collaborate with drug traffickers.<sup>1</sup> Under these circumstances, a Cuba under Castro can be expected to remain an offshore facility for drug flows into the United States, although the level of active government involvement is likely to fluctuate in response to the Cuban leader's needs, opportunities, and calculations.

What other challenges and crises might the United States confront in the early-to-mid 1990s? Trying to predict the behavior of Castro, his regime, and the Cuban people has become all the more hazardous because Cuba today is a moving target. The Cuban situation is in flux, not only because of events at home and abroad, but also because the regime itself is trying to adjust quickly to changes in its environment. Thus, despite the hopes and expectations of its critics, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the subsequent deterioration of the Cuban economy have not led to the regime's downfall, for the reasons discussed earlier.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the regime has had to deal with the loss of its Soviet benefactor only since the end of 1991; the crisis that event caused could deepen further with the passage of time.

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<sup>1</sup>In June 1989, the Ochoa-de la Guardia show trial gave revealing glimpses into the extent to which the Cuban government had collaborated with drug traffickers. Left unanswered was how the frequent comings and goings of drug operators, and their use of Cuban military and other state facilities, could have been possible without the knowledge of the Castro leadership. The trial of General Manuel Noriega in Miami this year produced evidence indicating Castro's direct involvement in aiding and abetting the drug traffickers.

<sup>2</sup>At the end of August 1991, an earlier draft version of this report placed somewhat greater emphasis on the crisis situations that Castro could confront in the early 1990s, rather than on his staying power. Nine months later, that assessment needs to be tempered. Recent Cuban developments, and a reexamination of Cuba's state and society, suggest that the Castro regime's survival for the foreseeable future is as much a possibility as its downfall.



At present, Castro is prepared to tough it out, undertaking only those minimal changes necessary to ensure the survival of his regime, with the goal of ultimately outmaneuvering the United States. But whether he succeeds beyond the short term (one to two years) will depend on a host of variables, including not only the effectiveness of the regime's policies in coping with the crisis, but also the behavior of the Cuban people in the years ahead. If the political and economic situation deteriorates during 1992 and beyond, the Cuban leader could be overtaken by events and begin to lose control, possibly lashing out at both his domestic and external enemies.

Hence, the United States needs to be prepared for different challenges from Castro and for crises that may develop on the island, and it must also begin to draft longer-term guidelines for dealing with a Cuba after Castro. A number of short-term (one to two years) and middle-term (three to five years) alternative futures need to be considered. These are discussed below, starting with the most probable and ending with the more remote but nonetheless plausible scenarios.

#### **CASTRO SURVIVES TO TAUNT THE UNITED STATES**

Because there are no good options at present, the regime has convinced itself that its best course is to hunker down, survive, and wait for things to change for the better. Whether this will work depends in large measure on the steps the government has taken to integrate parts of the Cuban economy into the global economy, primarily through the development of the new external sector but also through new trade ties to Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the West. This limited insertion into the global economy is not likely to turn the economic situation around, but it may be sufficient to prevent the economy from slipping into a free fall. If this occurs for four or five years, the regime could survive intact, disproving the prognosis of exiles and other outsiders that Cuba would follow in the path of other socialist states. The irony of such a turnabout is that Cuban socialism would be saved by Western capitalism.

But Castro's goal is not merely survival for the sake of survival. If he and his regime can tough it out in a proud, defiant manner that impresses the world and especially Latin America, he may create a situation that would help him engage in future Cuban-U.S. negotiations from a strong rather than weak hand. This scenario is not far-fetched, and if successful from the Cuban viewpoint, could present new challenges for U.S. policy.

### **The Instructive Mexican Case**

Rather than looking only at communist systems that have collapsed, it may be equally instructive to examine countries, like Mexico, that have exhibited remarkable resiliency in coping with economic and political stress. Like Cuba in the 1990s, Mexico in the 1980s was in the throes of one of its worst economic crises ever. The national debt soared, domestic capital fled, foreign investors stayed away, inflation and repeated devaluations eroded the standard of living, unemployment rose, and public confidence in Mexico's leaders fell. Many people in Mexico and elsewhere expected a collapse of the Mexican system. Yet political stability was maintained. Why?

Like Cuba, Mexico had its own indigenous revolution that provided the Mexican government with a reservoir of legitimacy, and also a strong, unifying sense of nationalism. As it does in Cuba, nationalism in Mexico revolves around the traditional emphases given to defending state sovereignty and rejecting U.S. interference. Diverse sectors of the Mexican elite and their followers could agree that maintaining national cohesion and order was essential, since internal disarray might allow the United States to take advantage of Mexico's weakness. A case may be made that forecasts of potential instability in Mexico, along with reports of U.S. support for an opposition party that was gaining strength in Mexico's northern border states, aroused widespread nationalist sensitivities and thereby actually helped Mexico's rulers to maintain regime cohesion and public peace.

A second reason why Mexico's political system survived the economic crisis is that the Mexican people were better able to cope with the crisis than many observers thought possible at the time. Foreshadowing the resilient and adaptive behavior exhibited by Cubans, many members of Mexican society had a substantial, albeit informal safety net that cushioned some of the economic hardship. People were able to rely on close family members and distant relations for temporary support in times of need. Still others cobbled together temporary or part-time work. Social pressures were also relieved through increased out-migration to the United States, followed by increased remittances of dollars back to Mexico.

However, Mexico remained stable for another reason that does not yet apply to Cuba: A new generation of leaders, led by presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas de Gortari, responded to the crisis by breaking with the old Mexican model of protectionist statism. This did not occur immediately; through the mid-1980s, the de la Madrid government attempted to stem the crisis by only tinkering with the traditional economic system. When that policy proved ineffective,

however, the government undertook a profound restructuring of the economy to make it more open to foreign trade and investment and to link it to the global economy. The new Salinas administration, in particular, explicitly accepted global interdependence and in so doing reformulated Mexican nationalism. And with their new economic strategy and nationalism, the Mexican leadership bought time.

The United States was also an important reason why Mexico was able to survive—an external factor that now finds no counterpart in Cuba's case because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The gravity of Mexico's crisis spurred Washington to assemble financial assistance packages, starting in the fall of 1982, that prevented the Mexican economy from collapsing, assured the Mexican people that they were not alone, and in the end helped stabilize the country. In turn, the new thinking of the de la Madrid and Salinas administrations facilitated U.S. assistance efforts during the 1980s.

### **Cuba's Strategy for Regaining the Offensive**

By comparison, the style and substance of Cuban nationalism seem stuck in a time warp.<sup>3</sup> The *fidelista* leadership does not sense that the established Cuban model is exhausted, but even if it did, it would not perceive that Cuba has options like Mexico's for fundamentally altering its political economy. The Cuban leadership remains too committed to statism qua socialism to liberalize the Cuban economy. It continues to fear, as the Mexican leadership did before the 1980s, that opening the door to change would invite foreign interference and destabilization. And, of course, the leadership will not permit the kinds of major political and economic transformations that would be required for the United States to consider assisting Cuba as it did when Mexico was in crisis.

And yet, as discussed earlier, a carefully controlled process of change is under way in the emerging external sector of Cuba's bifurcated economy, in which foreign investors are participating in joint ven-

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<sup>3</sup>It should be pointed out that the Mexican leadership took more than five years to modify its nationalist mindset following the onset of the financial crisis in August 1982, whereas the Cubans have felt a comparable shock—the dissolution of the USSR—for less than a year. Hence it could be argued that Cuban nationalism might also undergo a similar transformation in the future. However, a major difference between the two countries is that Mexico has mechanisms for leadership renewal every six years; this permitted a new generation of leaders to assume office who were better educated and more technically oriented. In contrast, Castro's monopoly of power precludes the rise of a new leadership, while his hubristic role as the source of all wisdom further impedes intellectual debate and radical thinking.

tures with Cuban partners. This, together with efforts to broaden trade ties to Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and the West, helps link Cuba to the global economy in an effort to arrest its economic deterioration. The change also serves several political purposes—ensuring regime survival, wrapping Cuba in a protective web of international economic and political ties, and placing the United States on the defensive regionally and internationally. Indeed, the latter may be Castro's endgame, a turnabout that would leave the Cuban leader triumphant in his long struggle with the "arrogant" Yankees whom he has attacked time and again for their "triumphalism" following the collapse of communism and the stunning U.S. victory in the Gulf War.

In this scenario, therefore, Cuba not only gets through the next few years with the regime intact; it also emerges with limited but sufficient foreign investments from Europe, Latin America, and Asia, and with enough ties to the global economy, that its international economic isolation has effectively ended except for the U.S. embargo.

Were this scenario to come to pass, it would present two vexing problems for U.S. policy. First, the United States would be faced not only with the continued existence of the *fidelista* regime for the foreseeable future, but also with a newly revitalized, confident, and emboldened Castro. The "old Fidel" would be likely to reappear to resume his 33-year obsessive struggle with the Colossus of the North. His renewed offensive probably would not take the form of new internationalist adventures, owing to the loss of his international patron and the new constraints created by Cuba's insertion into the global economy. More likely, it would see Havana developing supportive networks with Latin American governments, economic interests, political parties, nongovernment organizations, private groups, and intellectual circles in an effort to isolate the United States and create "two Americas"—one Anglo-Saxon and the other exclusively Latin and Caribbean.

The second, related problem for the United States would be how to justify its continued embargo against Cuba. The embargo would look increasingly anachronistic not only because of the Cold War's end and Cuba's apparent cessation of its "internationalist" and subversive activities in Africa and Central America, but also because of the end runs by Western investors and traders eager to do business in Cuba. Continued maintenance of the embargo under these circumstances would be subject to international and domestic criticism, including from U.S. investors and other economic interests wanting equal access to the island.

Castro and his followers would clearly delight in confronting the U.S. government with such a predicament. To put Washington further on the defensive, he might offer to convene a plebiscite on his rule or to hold "free" elections on the condition that the United States first lift the embargo and grant credits to Cuba. Such a *quid pro quo* would enable him to pose as a mature statesman before the world, even though he would be certain to frame his offer in such a way as to ensure that his regime would not lose the plebiscite or elections. Of course, anything less than free, internationally supervised elections held on a level playing field would be unacceptable to the United States and most other Western democracies.<sup>4</sup> Still, others in the international community, particularly leftist, nationalist circles in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World, would be inclined to applaud his grand gesture and to criticize the United States for its alleged intransigence and proclivity for meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign country.

#### **CRISIS SITUATIONS: MARIEL II AND AN INTERNAL POLITICAL EXPLOSION**

If the present strategy of bifurcated economic development fails to yield results, and if social and political tensions mount, the Castro regime may attempt to relieve pressures through another Mariel. Conversely, if the regime fails to stabilize the internal situation, sectors of the military or the populace could move against the *fidelista* government. Either scenario could confront U.S. policymakers with major problems.

#### **Another Mariel**

Cuba's attempts to diversify trade with the West, and especially to develop its new external sector with foreign participation, constrains Havana's foreign policy options and behavior. Hence, a "new Fidel" has emerged who is on his "good behavior" because he cannot afford to jeopardize his economic contacts with the West by pursuing a more "internationalist" or adventurist foreign policy.

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<sup>4</sup>To ensure a favorable outcome, Castro could insist that the plebiscite or elections be held within a short time period, and that the United States first lift the embargo and grant trade credits in order to ease economic conditions prior to the balloting. He could insist on limiting the number and efficacy of international observers on grounds that Cuba's sovereignty must not be violated. He could limit the opposition's access to the state-controlled media, while Party-directed mass organizations would be deployed to intimidate the populace and control balloting.

As in the past, however, Castro's present moderation and pragmatism are driven by expediency. They might well not last if the new economic strategy proves ineffective and/or internal political tensions mount. In such a situation, the revolutionary maximalist who constitutes the "old Fidel" could return to confront the United States with new challenges.<sup>5</sup>

One such surprise would be for Castro to threaten or actually facilitate illegal out-migration from the island beyond the steady flow of *balseros* and illegal immigrants that occurred during 1991 and again this year. The new wave of out-migration would resemble the Mariel exodus of 1980, but on a potentially far greater scale due to the much worse situation in Cuba today. Castro might employ the threat of a Mariel II as a bargaining chip to exact economic and diplomatic concessions from Washington, which could make him appear the victor in his 33-year struggle. If his threat did not wrest acceptable concessions, or if he felt he had nothing to lose, he could open up the port of Mariel and encourage a new boatlift by Cuban exiles, or allow desperate Cubans unrestricted access to Guantanamo Naval Base. Whether through Mariel, Guantanamo, or both outlets in combination, the exodus could become massive and deteriorate out of control.

A new exodus would hold political risks and other costs for Castro. Because it would heighten tensions between the United States and Cuba, it could discourage prospective foreign investors from participating in joint ventures on the island. For the same reason, it could also lead established foreign partners to pull out. Even if Castro were willing to pay that price—for example, because the external sector's economic returns were meager and the internal political situation was unraveling—there would still be other risks he would have to run.

Another Mariel would force Washington to suspend the 1985 immigration agreement with Havana, thereby halting out-migration flows that serve as a political safety valve. Also, the U.S. government would probably terminate travel by Cuban-Americans in the United States, and by Cubans living in Cuba, who are permitted to travel annually between the two countries under the family reunification arrangement.<sup>6</sup> Such a U.S. move would deprive the Cuban regime of

<sup>5</sup>On different facets of Castro's political personality and *modus operandi*, see Edward Gonzalez and David Ronfeldt, *Castro, Cuba, and the World*, RAND, R-3420, June 1986.

<sup>6</sup>The number of Cuban-Americans who can visit the island is limited by the Castro government to 5000. Between 40,000 and 45,000 Cubans visited the United States in fiscal 1990. Between October 1990 and July 1991, when the United States stopped

roughly \$40 million in gross hard-currency earnings that were generated by the two-way travel in 1990.

Internationally, a mass exodus would be a black eye—a major loss of prestige for the regime. Within Cuba, the outflow might become so large that key control institutions—the Ministry of Interior, the Armed Forces, the Party, and the mass organizations—would lose control over the populace, leading to a chaotic, potentially anarchic situation.

On the other hand, if political order is maintained, the exodus could provide the regime with some needed breathing space by eliminating the most desperate and dissatisfied persons from the body politic. The assets of the departed could be redistributed, particularly among militants and supporters in the Party and mass organizations. For Castro, in short, a new Mariel-type exodus could constitute an act of purification, consolidation, and material opportunity.

Moreover, Castro might welcome U.S. military actions to discourage a new boatlift from Cuba. He would undoubtedly take delight in forcing the United States to restrain Cuban exiles from leaving Florida to retrieve family and friends on the island. A U.S. blockade to intercept and turn back Cuban refugees from the island could become an international embarrassment for Washington. And he could use U.S.-Cuban tensions over a new Mariel to rekindle nationalism and to rally the Cuban military and people behind his regime.

### **Detonating Violent Change**

- If out-migration and a bifurcated economy fail to relieve internal pressures, if peaceful change cannot come from above under a Castro-led regime, and if it cannot come from below because civil society remains too weak to initiate it, then there is greater potential for an explosion. Such explosive change is not likely to occur in 1992, in light of the regime's controls and strengths and because of the present permissiveness of society. However, many of the preconditions that led to the demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are already emerging in Cuba. Among these are the following:
  - A deteriorating economic situation that may ultimately erode regime legitimacy and widen the gap between elites and masses.

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taking further visa applications, 40,000 U.S. visas had been granted to Cubans, while a backlog of 28,000 remained to be processed.

- Leadership divisions within the regime over what political and economic policies to follow.
- Signs of some elite sectors' declining faith in Marxism and the *fidelista* system.

If these preconditions intensify, the regime could be faced with an increasingly volatile internal situation, possibly as early as 1993.

How, then, might some explosive change be detonated, given the peculiarities of the Cuban situation? There appear to be four possible scenarios. They are based on the proposition that in a tightly controlled society, eruptions of initially unorganized, spontaneous forms of political action are more likely than organized forms of collective action. They also presuppose that at some juncture, Cuban youth will again become political and assume a critical if not determinant role in the outcome of a violent change process. These scenarios are described below in ascending order of probability.

*A military coup is mounted by junior and middle-level officers.* This would require that the FAR revert to a Latin American military mode of political intervention. But unlike the case elsewhere, an anti-regime conspiracy within the FAR would be difficult to pull off, due to the military's penetration by the Party and counterintelligence.<sup>7</sup> If attempted, the coup might or might not ignite a civil war, depending on the extent to which other army and air force units joined the rebels or remained loyal to the regime, and on whether the populace supported the rebellion.

*An assassination attempt on the Castro brothers.* An assassination plot would have to involve a small group of conspirators, but it would also have to be large enough to carry out attacks on both Fidel and Raúl because, for security reasons, the two are seldom together. The tight security around the brothers has foiled past assassination attempts. For that reason, the conspirators would have to be prepared to die in their assault, in the Cuban tradition of revolutionary martyrs.

*Spontaneous, escalating antiregime demonstrations.* Because of the weakness of civil society, popular demonstrations against the regime would probably be born of despair, and assume an anomic, disorga-

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<sup>7</sup>One hypothesis concerning the trial and execution of Division General Arnaldo Ochoa of the FAR and MININT Colonel Antonio de la Guardia is that both men had been discovered planning a coup against Castro and his followers. If so, then the drug charges against Ochoa in particular served not only to destroy his reputation but also to conceal the antiregime conspiracy from the military as well as the public.



nized character at first. To quash the disturbances and make sure they did not spread, the regime would need to deploy Ministry of Interior troops as well as rapid-reaction brigades. If the regime overreacted and killed civilians, the action might precipitate a break within the regime and lead to civil war if units of the army, the Territorial Troop Militia, and others were to join the civilian protesters.

*The populace engages in an undeclared general strike.* Work absenteeism has long been a chronic problem that the regime has been unable to curb even in the relatively prosperous years of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, a spontaneous undeclared general strike could emerge from sectors of an otherwise weak civil society who realize that it is futile to continue working when there is nothing to work with and nothing to buy. Such a strike would amount to a massive but passive act of civil disobedience. Were the strike to spread throughout the island, it could tax the regime's highly centralized and top-down control mechanisms. Ultimately it could paralyze the island's economy and public services.

Any one of these uncontrolled situations might be welcomed by some quarters in the United States, particularly among the more extreme elements of the exile community. But unless the regime were to collapse quickly, such crises could also prove unmanageable for the United States and limit Washington's policy options and room for maneuver. This might especially be the case if mounting internal violence or civil war on the island led to pressures within the United States to intervene unilaterally.

Indeed, in contrast to the system breakdowns that took place in most of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Castro regime is not likely to succumb peacefully once it has entered a terminal crisis. Cuba still has a first-generation Marxist-Leninist regime that has its true believers, is accustomed to adversity and confrontation, and enjoys support among those who are the beneficiaries of the revolution. As discussed earlier, many within the regime have a vested interest in the existing order, and in preserving their rank, power, and privileges at all costs.

If armed conflict does break out, it is certain to occur between two polarized groups cutting across civilian and military sectors of Cuban society: the regime loyalists, especially the committed *fidelistas* and *raulistas*, versus regime opponents. Additionally, save for a successful dual assassination, the outcome of each of the uncontrolled crisis scenarios is likely to remain uncertain: the loyalists or the opposition

could triumph, or a stalemate could ensue in which neither side gains the upper hand. However, there are two interrelated variables that could affect the intensity of violence and the outcome of a crisis.

First, the element of time would appear to be an important factor in determining the outcome of any of these scenarios. The quicker the regime is able to crush a protest or uprising, the less likely the incident is to spread and escalate, or the international community to react strongly to events inside Cuba. Conversely, the longer the antiregime movement survives, the more likely the conflict will be to spread internally, and the greater the prospect of international involvement and support for the opposition.

Second, U.S. policy could inadvertently strengthen Castro's hand. The specter of U.S. meddling in an internal conflict or, worse yet, unilateral military intervention, could enable Castro to rally nationalistic Cubans to his side, including those who may wish his demise, and to portray anti-*fidelista* forces as U.S. stooges. U.S. intervention in a civil war on grounds of stopping the bloodletting might in fact increase the level of violence and bloodshed, if battle-tested Cuban army units remained loyal to the regime and engaged U.S. forces in a protracted conflict.

### A FINAL SHOWDOWN FOR MARTYRDOM

If Cuba is unable to diversify its linkages to the world economy, and if his regime appears on the verge of unraveling, Castro may fear that his quest for eternal glory is slipping away. Under such adversity, he might engineer a final reckoning with the United States, partly to assure himself a martyr's place in history as Latin America's undaunted, undefeated champion and leader of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Although remote, such a *Götterdämmerung* scenario is not far-fetched. Castro has demonstrated a readiness to risk his own death and that of others at critical moments over the past 33 years:

- In 1959, he informed a stunned cabinet meeting that it didn't matter if the United States sent the marines and three to four hundred thousand Cubans were killed, because "they will build a monument to me bigger than the one for Jose Martí."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>As reported to Edward Gonzalez by Ernesto Betancourt, who was present at the meeting in July 1959, in an October 3, 1985, interview.

- In a message to Khrushchev during the October 1962 missile crisis, he urged the Soviet leader to employ tactical nuclear weapons if U.S. forces invaded the island.
- In the October 1983 Grenadan invasion, he ordered Cuban military personnel and construction workers to fight to the death, notwithstanding the futility of their resistance.
- In June 1985 he declared, "What can they do, drop three nuclear bombs here? . . . Three nuclear bombs, or 100, 1000, or 10,000 nuclear bombs amount to something if you're afraid of them, but if you aren't they're chicken excrement, that's all."<sup>9</sup>
- After he defected in May 1986, Brigadier General Rafael del Pino of the Cuban Air Force disclosed that Cuban combat pilots regularly train for air strikes against Homestead Air Force Base to force the Soviets to come to Cuba's aid in the event of U.S. aggression. Similar simulated raids also were practiced against Guantanamo Naval Base.<sup>10</sup>
- Under the pretext of anticipating U.S. armed aggression, Castro's regime is constructing bomb shelters and deep underground tunnels, while the FAR engaged in military exercises in early 1992.

Indeed, Castro's closing speech to the Fourth Party Congress the previous October had been unusually apocalyptic. He vowed that even if "the entire Central Committee . . . the whole congress . . . the entire party" died defending the revolution, "we would not be weakened because after that, they would have to kill all the people . . . [and] thousands upon millions around the world who will never accept exploitation, hunger, and injustice."<sup>11</sup> This portends high risks of both death and destruction for the Cuban people. If Cuba becomes the scene of violent conflict threatening his regime, Castro may well expect, if not see to it, that his death is accompanied by the deaths of his followers from all sectors of society in what would be a collective act of martyrdom.

But in addition, Cuba's aging and increasingly angry caudillo could seek to bring the house down in ways that are also destructive for the United States—the *Götterdämmerung* scenario. He could work to precipitate a military confrontation with the "Yankees" by deliberately flooding Florida with boat people, concocting a military en-

<sup>9</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, June 16, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>*The New York Times*, October 11, 1987, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>*FBIS-LAT-91-202*, October 18, 1991, p. 3.

counter at sea or in the air, attacking Guantanamo, or ordering heavy-handed repression against antiregime demonstrations. Such incidents could create strong pressures within the United States to respond with military force and even to intervene to depose his regime. Were that to occur, he might calculate that the Cuban masses and armed forces, and much of Latin America, would rally behind him in the face of "Yankee aggression," and that his unyielding defiance could assure his place in history.

Whether the Cuban people and armed forces would allow themselves to be drawn into a *Götterdämmerung* scenario remains problematical. Castro could miscalculate. But he could also set in motion a series of events that neither Cuba nor the United States could contain, and that could escalate into armed conflict causing extensive loss of life and property damage. Such an ending to the Castro regime would leave a successor government with a ruinous legacy upon which to build a new Cuba and improve relations with the United States.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

The above Cuban futures and scenarios indicate that U.S. policy needs to be prudential on two counts: it should not presume Castro's imminent demise, and it must prepare for possible uncontrolled crises erupting on the island or, worse yet, a Castro-engineered military confrontation. Meanwhile, U.S. policy cannot simply be reactive. Cuba continues to be too important to U.S. interests to wait for developments to unfold one way or the other.

Cuba commands vital sea and air lanes of communication in the Caribbean. The island may become even more wide open to drug traffickers if it is politically unstable or ruled by a corrupt Castro or post-Castro government. With its population of 10.7 million, the island is also a potential exporter of people to the United States, especially if civil strife and a wasted economy comprise Cuba's future. In this respect, the United States today is in a position analogous to the one it was in almost a century ago, when it first had to confront a "Cuba problem" and ended up in a military intervention and occupation, followed by a prolonged protectorate, from which U.S. relations with Cuba and Latin America never fully recovered. As occurred then, what the United States does in the years ahead may well affect how Cuba impacts on U.S. interests—here at home, on the island, and more broadly in Latin America—for decades to come.

## **6. U.S. INTERESTS, OBJECTIVES, AND OPTIONS**

American policymakers and analysts are advised to distinguish carefully between (a) U.S. interests and objectives toward Castro and his regime and (b) U.S. interests and objectives toward Cuba and its future. In the first instance, the major U.S. objective remains to promote fundamental change in Cuba by hastening the Castro regime's transformation or demise. In the second instance, the United States seeks a new Cuba that is not only free, democratic, and market-oriented, but also viable and stable over the long term.

These two sets of objectives are separate but interrelated. Depending on circumstances and timing, achieving Castro's demise could make the second objective either more likely to come to pass—or more elusive. Thus, a reassessment of U.S. options should weigh carefully their potential effects not only on Castro but also on Cuba more generally, including a Cuba after Castro, whenever that may occur. In short, U.S. policy must address two Cubas. Towards this end, it may be important to adopt a long-term horizon (over five years) in reassessing U.S. options, in order to avoid approaches that may offer short-term or even medium-term gains but lead to compounded costs over the long run.

### **CUBA: A MOVING TARGET**

In light of the scenarios discussed above, the current juncture in Cuba presents two disparate prospects that U.S. policy has not faced in combination before:

- On one hand, the Cuban economy and the Castro regime could collapse in a year or two, finally opening the way to the establishment of a new regime.
- On the other hand, Castro and Cuba could muddle through and emerge in a few years fully stable with significant ties to the global economy except for the United States.

At this time, stability seems more likely than instability in Cuba over the short term (one to two years) and perhaps the medium term (three to five years). The Castro regime, despite its problems, stands a chance of muddling through. The regime remains cohesive. The bifurcation of the economy may earn enough external income to keep the internal economy from collapsing while gratifying segments of the

elite who get "franchises" to operate in the external economy. Moreover, the apolitical disposition of the Cuban populace and the absence—indeed the regime's prevention—of nongovernment organizations may continue to stunt the growth of civil society and inhibit calls for democratic reform. Prudence alone thus suggests that policymakers and analysts should remain unconvinced that Castro and his regime are on the verge of collapse; subscribing to the instability hypothesis might play into his hands by promoting elite cohesion.

But even though stability seems likelier than instability, the situation remains potentially quite volatile. If the Cuban economy continues to deteriorate, public order and the regime's survival may be threatened. U.S. policy could be faced with another Mariel-type exodus, an uncontrollable crisis on the island, or more dangerous still, a military confrontation engineered by Castro. Thus Cuba presents a potential for violent change that at first glance might seem fraught with opportunities but could also carry high risks and spawn complex endgames for the United States.

Whatever the outcome in the long run, Cuba and Castro are bound to represent "moving targets" for analysis over the next year or two. Nine months ago, instability seemed more likely than stability. Today, the probabilities are reversed. What the picture may look like some months from now is uncertain. A review of U.S. interests, objectives, and options is in order, to ascertain how well prepared U.S. policy is for dealing with this moving, potentially surprising target.

#### **SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM U.S. OBJECTIVES**

The United States has long aimed to be rid of Castro. Much would be gained from his fall. We would be rid of a bitter remnant of the Cold War, a lingering irritant and potentially renewable threat to some U.S. interests in Latin America, a divisive issue in inter-American affairs, a continuing Russian intelligence capability on the island, and the possibility of a future high-risk confrontation on Castro's terms. Also, his fall would gratify Cuban exile communities in the United States, and could augment the trend toward democracy in Latin America.

While there are good reasons for seeking Castro's demise, there are also good reasons for not wanting it to occur under certain circumstances. If it results in U.S. entanglement in a bloody civil war or a desperate Castro-directed attack on the U.S. mainland, if it is blamed on the United States by outraged Latin Americans, if it leads to so much conflict and disarray in Cuba that a democratic order cannot be

achieved, economic recovery falters, massive out-migration occurs, and the island becomes wide open to drug smuggling, then the benefits from Castro's fall would be attained at high cost, and Cuba after Castro would probably become a lingering sore for diverse U.S. interests and objectives.

It would be best if Castro and his regime were succeeded—without a civil war or other internecine violence—by a democratic government that is able to obtain widespread legitimizing support at home and abroad, undertake effective economic development policies; allow the independent growth of a civil society, bridge differences between local and exile leaders, cooperate with the United States, and receive a strong welcome in Latin America. Even a Cuba without Castro might find it useful to retain some trade ties with Russia (or the CIS), given that each needs the other's exports—petroleum and sugar.

But what if Castro, his regime, and his version of socialism muddle through to emerge fully secure and moving in directions that combine continued defiance of the United States with partial integration into the global economy and relations with most major powers except the United States? How then could the U.S. government continue to justify the embargo, and aim to have the Castro regime replaced? What would be the implications of this radically changed set of circumstances for U.S. interests and objectives?

A U.S. objective whose importance is likely to increase if the Castro regime endures is the growth of civil society. This term refers to the presence of not only the family unit and a private sector, but also a wide variety of institutions, organized groups, and networks that arise at all levels of society, independent of government, in order to satisfy people's needs, represent their views, and undertake activities on their behalf. The growth of civil society has depended historically on the separation of state and society and the emergence of a market economy; for then democratic pluralism can take root. But this is not the case in Cuba. Castro and his regime reflect a centuries-older tradition of placing everything—polity, society, economy, etc.—under the aegis of centralized control. State and society must be kept fused and a market economy prohibited for this form of organization to persist.

The dearth of civil society in Cuba affects a range of political considerations, including the possibility of popular movements getting organized to challenge the Castro regime and advocate reform, the potential for civil war if violence breaks out, and the outlook for democracy if the regime falls. Unfortunately, the United States has few instruments available for fostering a strong, diverse, independent

civil society in Cuba. If this is an important objective for U.S. policy—and we believe it is—then its development may require some innovative thinking and actions that can be extended over the long term, not only to help cope with the prospect that Castro's regime may endure but also to help lay the bases for a post-Castro Cuba. Our analysis, to anticipate the next subsection, points to facilitating information and communications flows as a step that has often strengthened civil society.

### **U.S. POLICY OPTIONS**

Several options are available to the United States for pursuing its complicated objectives and avoiding being overtaken by events. Which of these options may best guide future U.S. policy will depend in part on what happens in Cuba. Policymakers should be prepared to shift policy tracks or possibly recombine different elements from two or more options as problems and opportunities emerge. Ideally, no option should foreclose the adoption of another, nor should any option be irreversible.

The four generic options examined here are: (a) continuing the present policy of active containment and isolation; (b) heightening U.S. political, economic, and possibly military pressures; (c) easing the pressures, including lifting the embargo; and (d) increasing information flows and building communications bridges to make Cuba more open.

#### **Active Containment**

This well-established, long-term policy has emphasized actively containing and pressuring the Castro regime, while never closing the door to discussions and negotiations when presented with serious positive signals from Cuba. The emphasis has been on constraining and altering the regime's behavior without directly undertaking to change the regime itself.

The policy has sought to isolate Cuba diplomatically, weaken its economy through a commercial and financial embargo, contain the regime's efforts to foster revolution and subversion abroad, and place Castro on the defensive by beaming radio and television programs at Cuba and by exposing in international forums his regime's human-rights abuses. It has urged the Cuban government to hold free, internationally supervised elections. The recent pressures on Moscow to curtail its economic and military support for Cuba also formed part of this approach.



Notwithstanding its embargo, Washington does not prohibit private U.S. organizations from sending medical supplies and informational materials to nongovernment organizations in Cuba for humanitarian reasons. Indeed, when suitable, this policy tolerates and may even promote private-to-private contacts between U.S. and Cuban groups in order to facilitate humanitarian relief and nurture pluralism.

Overall, a strong case may be made that the policy has been quite successful and that there is little reason to change it. It may now have its best chance ever of leading to the demise of the Castro regime, in part because it is now reinforced by the "second embargo" that has resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the embargo is increasingly circumvented by foreign companies and governments that are no longer constrained by the imperatives of the Cold War to cooperate with U.S. policy. Indeed, the policy may prove an embarrassment if the regime emerges from the current juncture with a growing external sector and capitalist partners from around the world.

### **Pros**

- Provides continuity for a largely successful policy that Washington understands well.
- Limits Cuba's opportunities for economic growth, and keeps the Castro regime locked in a failing mode that may be leading to its demise at last.
- Keeps a focus on the lack of democracy and pluralism in Cuba.
- Puts the onus on the Castro regime to make reforms as a condition for modifying U.S. policy.
- Has general support among Cuban exile communities.
- Is flexible, allowing shifts to more hardline or conciliatory stances, and does not impede a shift to another policy.
- Prevents U.S. companies who want to invest and trade with Cuba from facilitating the survival of the Castro regime.
- Is philosophically consistent with the creation of a "new world order" that abjures repressive neo-Stalinist political systems.

### **Cons**

- Does not offer Castro a face-saving way to change, thus helps keep him in a hardened state of mind.

- Helps Castro justify continued repression.
- Appears to be a relic held over from the Cold War era.
- Does little to build contacts with elites and sectors of the regime that may be interested in reform.
- Does little to assist nongovernment organizations and other nascent elements of a civil society.
- May leave the United States in a paradoxical position of embargoing a country that is otherwise integrated into the global economy.
- May leave the United States on the defensive if a concerted Latin American effort arises to normalize relations with Cuba and reintegrate it into the inter-American system.
- Could unwittingly contribute, if Castro does not change, to an uncontrollable crisis in Cuba, accompanied by bloodshed and high refugee flows.
- May not assure Castro's demise within the short-to-medium term.

Key uncertainties for this option include: (a) whether this type of long-term pressure will eventually cause the Castro regime to crack; (b) whether reformist and dissident elements in Cuba are indirectly nurtured or harmed by the policy; (c) how to respond in the event of a Latin American effort to reintegrate Cuba into the hemispheric community over U.S. objections; and (d) how to respond if Asian, European, and Latin American trade and investment grow substantially with Cuba despite the U.S. embargo.

### **Heightening of Pressures**

As earlier sections of this study observe, Castro and his regime seem weaker and more vulnerable than ever before. Thus a case may be made that the United States has a "window of opportunity" in which to use heightened pressures to accelerate an internal crisis and collapse, and thereby be rid of Castro and his regime before any trends turn in his favor. Since he is unlikely to leave power peaceably and of his own volition, this option involves expectations of fomenting violence on the island. Whereas the present policy seeks to contain and penalize the regime for its egregious behavior at home and abroad, this option aims at putting an end to the regime as expediently as possible.

The option may entail severely ratcheting up a set of pressures that form part of the established policy of active containment. These could include tightening the economic embargo by closing some remaining

loopholes; aggressively spotlighting human-rights violations and calling for improvements; expanding the existing informational and propaganda broadcasts to Cuba by radio and television; pressing vociferously for internationally supervised elections; and encouraging dissident elements in Cuba to mount protest demonstrations against the regime.

In addition, this option may entail measures that depart from the present policy. These could include: enacting new legislation to forbid U.S. subsidiaries in third countries from trading with Cuba; sharply curtailing legal and illegal Cuban immigration to the United States in order to exacerbate tensions in Cuba; and employing U.S. military intervention, perhaps in the form of a "humanitarian intervention," in case civil war breaks out and anti-Castro forces appear to need outside assistance.

### Pros

- May lead to the quick and certain demise of Castro and his regime, ending the remnants of Russian presence in Cuba as well as Cuban support for revolutionary movements abroad.
- May lead to a democratic regime in a post-Castro Cuba, helping consolidate the hemispheric trend toward democracy.
- Could limit bloodshed and instability in Cuba over the long run if the regime is quickly deposed.
- May gratify hardline elements of the Cuban-American community if the policy proves successful in deposing Castro with minimal cost to life.

### Cons

- At the lower end of the spectrum of coercion, may underestimate Castro's staying power, meaning pressures would have to be escalated to assure his downfall.
- At the higher end of the spectrum, would probably unify the Cuban military as an institution and bond it to the regime.
- Would reinforce Castro's classic confrontational tendencies, possibly leading to an effort to achieve a *Götterdämmerung*-like ending for himself and Cuba.

- May be a costly mistake, especially for U.S. relations with Latin America, to ratchet up U.S. pressures if Castro and his regime are headed for a fall anyway.
- May antagonize human-rights, peace, and other humanitarian organizations.
- May arouse unexpected opposition from Cuban-Americans who want to facilitate out-migration from the island under the family unification agreement, and who may care more about the lives of their relatives than about violently overthrowing Castro.
- May result in an increasingly bloody, chaotic situation in Cuba, putting the U.S. government under pressure (especially from exiles) to intervene militarily and remain a long time.
- May outrage Latin Americans across the political spectrum, assure that Castro becomes a martyr to Latin American history and nationalism, and undermine the prospects for collective action by the OAS in Cuba and elsewhere, especially if the U.S. military intervenes unilaterally.
- May result in a Bay of Pigs-style triumph for Castro if he does not fall, and if the United States is prevented from intervening or compelled to withdraw after intervening because of Latin American and other international pressures.
- May result in chronic instability and prevent the establishment of a sound successor regime if Castro and his regime fall in the context of a civil war and U.S. intervention that bitterly divides the Cuban people and the Cuban exile community.
- May incur large-scale refugee and immigration flows.
- Once initiated, may lock in U.S. policy and prevent a shift to other options.

The key uncertainties for this option, which may be detected in the list of pros and cons, include: (a) whether Castro has enough strength to survive virtually any challenge short of a successful U.S. military overthrow; (b) conversely (and less likely), whether Castro is so weak and vulnerable that it may be unnecessary to intensify U.S. pressures to achieve his downfall; (c) how much violence may be generated in Cuba by a policy of heightened pressures, and how this would affect long-term trends there and related U.S. interests and objectives; (d) if a U.S. military intervention is deemed necessary, how large it would have to be to assure a quick success with minimal casualties and political costs, and how long U.S. forces would have to remain in Cuba;

and (e) how to bring the policy to a successful conclusion, including from the viewpoint of U.S. allies in the hemisphere.

### **Easing of Pressures**

Over the past three decades, Cuba and the United States have occasionally been receptive to conciliatory overtures from each other that aimed at improving relations. But the record shows that Havana's inviting behavior toward U.S. policy shifts, most notably under the Carter administration in 1977, were but tactical maneuvers that preceded Castro's military interventions in Africa, and that Castro never intended to reform his foreign or domestic policies. This pattern of deception and duplicity makes it difficult to believe arguments that Cuba may be seriously interested in restoring good, open relations with the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Today, various voices in Cuba and elsewhere are again suggesting that this may be a good time for the United States to consider easing its pressures on the Castro regime, notably by lifting the economic embargo, the centerpiece of U.S. strategy for decades. Arguments in favor of this option maintain that Cuba is weak, in trouble, and no longer capable of threatening U.S. interests, that reformist elements are present but need support to gain strength, and that Castro may want a way out, as evidenced earlier by his expeditious compliance with the Angola-Namibia accords. Moreover, it has been argued that he would gain only limited economic benefits from a lifting of the embargo. Cuba would not acquire a large new market for its exports—the total U.S. allocation for foreign sugar suppliers is only two million tons—and the country lacks cash and credits for buying U.S. goods and services. This means that this option must be analyzed differently from how it would have been analyzed in the past, when lifting the embargo would surely have resulted in large trade and investment flows.

A key uncertainty of this option is how it would affect the balance of power between hard-line elements, including Castro, and reformist elements who reportedly are there (but are difficult to identify). It is often presumed that lifting the embargo would favor the reformists (if they exist). But this is not clear. In the short term, Castro could treat it as *his* victory, which would reinforce his image at home and

<sup>1</sup>On Castro's *modus operandi* in foreign and domestic affairs, see Edward Gonzalez and David Ronfeldt, *Castro, Cuba, and the World*, RAND, R-3420, June 1986. See also Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1989.

abroad. In the longer term, if lifting the embargo led to little U.S. trade and investment—and this seems likely unless Cuba discovers commercial oil deposits—Castro could turn to tell the reformists how wrong they were to expect much from the United States. However, a slow start on economic relations with the United States might strengthen the hand of reformists if they were able to act in concert with international and U.S. financial agencies to recommend measures to restructure the Cuban economy.

Indeed, this option need not be cast in terms of a normalization of relations with the United States. It might be approached in terms of reintegrating Cuba into the global economy, not in the selective way that Castro is now pursuing but rather in a more formalized, market-oriented way. This could put the onus on Cuba to deal with entities like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) before it would be allowed to try to tap U.S. economic resources. Castro has made a career of anti-imperialism; it will not be easy for him to turn antiglobalist, given Cuba's pressing economic needs.

Another key uncertainty is the potential effect of this option on the growth of civil society. Merely lifting the embargo might not have much effect. More important would be ancillary developments, especially with regard to information and communications flows between local and outside groups, including the exile communities in the United States. If the embargo or aspects of it are lifted at some point, there should be continued commitment to improving human rights and opening the political space allowed to dissident groups. (Spain provides the best current model of this; it alone of the countries investing in and trading with Cuba continues to press on issues of human rights and democratic opposition.)

### **Pros**

- May result in little U.S. trade or investment flowing to Cuba, due to its lack of cash and credit, poor infrastructure, and low productivity.
- Yet would enable U.S. companies to compete with European and other investors for concessions in Cuba, including petroleum exploration and development.
- Would be greeted favorably by some sectors in Latin America, perhaps improving the U.S. image in the hemisphere.

- May help moderate Castro's behavior toward the United States on some issues as a *quid pro quo* for credits and/or expanded trade and investment ties.
- May open space and generate resources for the rise of Cuban elites who favor reform.
- May open space and generate resources and contacts for the development of civil society, including a full range of nongovernment actors.
- May lead to fair, internationally supervised elections in Cuba, if that is made a condition for lifting the embargo.

### Cons

- Would allow Castro to claim a major victory, bolstering his popularity at home and probably assuring greater electoral strength for his regime, were competitive elections held, than it would otherwise enjoy.
- May not lead soon to a more open political system; may enable the *fidelista* elites and institutions to remain in power.
- Would not necessarily lead, at least not in the short term, to the formation of independent nongovernment organizations, or protect dissident elements from human-rights and other abuses.
- May prompt commercial and financial actors in Asia, Europe, and Latin America to expand their economic relations with Cuba, and thereby enable it to obtain favorable terms and credits abroad.
- Would open Cuba to travel by U.S. citizens, providing the Cuban economy with a significant infusion of U.S. tourist dollars.
- Would provoke criticisms at home and abroad of helping salvage an anachronistic, neo-Stalinist regime at a time when communism has collapsed virtually everywhere else.
- Would outrage conservative elements among the Cuban exiles for allowing Castro to survive when he seemed on the ropes.
- May stimulate immigration and refugee flows if U.S. travel restrictions are relaxed, or if the island's economy does not rebound as expected.
- Would make it difficult for the United States to shift back to a policy of pressure and containment, including a reimposition of the economic embargo.

The key uncertainties for this option include: (a) how much new trade and investment may flow to Cuba from the United States and other sources; (b) whether reformist elements in Cuba would be strengthened or weakened vis-à-vis Castro; (c) whether a more open political system would result; (d) whether a private sector along with nongovernment organizations, key elements of a civil society, would be allowed to form and grow independently of the Cuban state; and (e) how to reassert a hard line if a soft line does not work and a recalcitrant, confrontational Castro remains in power.

### **Information and Communications To Open Cuba Up**

U.S. policies to isolate the Castro regime are well developed in the traditional areas of politics and economics. Meanwhile, technology advances are giving rise to a new area: information and communications policy. A lesson from the recent democratic revolutions in the East is that increased information and communications flows from the West, along with the adoption of related confidence-building measures in security areas, can penetrate and open up closed systems. Cuba may be ripe for application of this lesson. A comprehensive policy to open Cuba up could involve a range of steps, some of which may require modifying the embargo or other U.S. laws and restrictions.<sup>2</sup>

**Get more materials into Cuba.** Getting information into Castro's Cuba has long been an aspect of U.S. policy. Sending informational materials—e.g., books, periodicals, microfiches, records, compact discs—to Cuba is allowed under the terms of the economic embargo. Also, Cubans may purchase such items in the United States for shipment to Cuba, although direct marketing in Cuba is prohibited. In addition, the U.S. Interests Section and private groups may donate such items to Cuba. Ways might be found to increase the availability of American and other foreign publications in Cuba.<sup>3</sup> The United States has proposed direct mail delivery—another good objective—but Cuba has denied this so far.

**Expand telephone connections.** Telephone lines between the two countries—essentially three AT&T cables—exist but provide a limited capacity. The most modern of the cables, with a medium capacity, is not even in operation. It was installed years ago to replace a broken cable between Florida and Havana, and is superior to the cable it re-

<sup>2</sup>We devote more commentary to this option than to the others simply because it has received less analysis in the past, and may be relatively new to many readers.

<sup>3</sup>Mexico's prestigious government-affiliated publishing house, Fondo de Cultura Economica (FCE), has just been allowed to open an office in Havana.



placed and the microwave transmitter substituting for it. The United States should aim to see this dormant cable put into operation. It could significantly improve telephone access between the two countries, to the benefit of Cuban exiles in particular. But because the embargo prohibits transferring funds to Cuba, issues of past and future payments need to be resolved with Cuba's government before the cable may be put into operation. An agreement was negotiated not long ago with Cuba's Ministry of Communications, but it presently remains blocked by higher levels, ostensibly over payment issues.

Companies other than AT&T have tried to provide telecommunications services between Miami and Cuba, by routing calls through Canada for example, but they fell afoul of the embargo and were closed down. A new look might be taken at permitting such companies to offer links to Cuba via third countries (e.g., Canada, Mexico).

In an area unaffected by the U.S. embargo, Cuba has access to all international telecommunications satellites (e.g., INTELSAT, Mexico's Morelos system), which it may use to route calls abroad, including to the United States. Cuba also has a contract with the Cable News Network (CNN) that allows Cuba to take its own selection of CNN film clips off CNN's satellites.

**Reassess the content of radio and television programming.** The creation of Radio Martí—more so than TV Martí—was an important step toward creating a new information and communications policy.<sup>4</sup> But a question has arisen as to whether these agencies are properly suited to promoting one of their objectives: the encouragement of civil society in Cuba and related contacts between Cubans and Cuban exiles. It is said that their programming consistently ignores a major dissident, Elizardo Sánchez, who heads the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and Reconciliation, because The Cuban American National Foundation wants the spotlight kept on its own leader, Jorge Mas Canosa.<sup>5</sup> If Radio and TV Martí are being exploited in this fashion, Elliot Abrams, former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American affairs, is quite right to object that

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<sup>4</sup>From its initial broadcasts in 1985 until it was jammed in 1990, Radio Martí was both credible and effective in providing Cubans with an alternative source of news and information. The concept of television broadcasts to Cuba was sound, but TV Martí raised questions concerning the illegal use by the U.S. government of another country's assigned television channel, served as a vehicle for certain politically ambitious Cuban-Americans, and was easily jammed by the Cubans when the broadcasts began in 1990. The start-up of TV Martí broadcasts provided the Cubans a pretext for jamming Radio Martí as well.

<sup>5</sup>See John Newhouse, "A Reporter at Large—Socialism or Death," *The New Yorker*, April 27, 1992, pp. 73–85.

it is a mistake for Washington to appear closer to any one of these groups in what everyone agrees is going to be a power struggle.... Some distancing [from CANF] is now needed to avoid verifying Castro's propaganda that Cuban-American millionaires and Washington are in collusion.<sup>6</sup>

**Build bridges across computer networks.** Special attention might be given to the area of technologically advanced communications. The Cuban state is applying new computer technologies in numerous areas, including science, medicine, law, and public administration.<sup>7</sup> It realizes that Cuba must have advanced telecommunications services to attract foreign companies to Cuba. It is training hundreds of youth in the use of computers and the development of hardware and software. It convenes international conferences on issues relating to the information revolution. And its experts are gaining access to key computer networks around the world—an area, often termed “worldnet” or “cyberspace,” that the U.S. embargo cannot control.

U.S. policy might attend to enabling Cuban individuals and non-government organizations to use computerized electronic mail and conferencing networks that span the globe. In this regard, the Cuban Academy of Science—assisted by the United Nations Development Program, the U.S.-based Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and the Institute for Global Communications (IGC)—installed a computer network node in Cuba last year at the Center for Automated Information Exchange (CENIAI) within the Academy of Science. This node exchanges electronic mail periodically through telephone links with an APC-affiliated network in Canada called Web, which in turn feeds into PeaceNet, a U.S.-based network created by peace and human-rights activists whose home is the IGC.<sup>8</sup> Through these interconnections, the node in Cuba may send and receive electronic mail across key academic, research, and activist networks around the world. Several hundred persons and organizations, all surely sanctioned by the regime, have addresses on networks in Cuba

<sup>6</sup>From Linda Robinson, “After Castro Moves Out,” *U.S. News and World Report*, May 4, 1992, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>Castro and other Cuban leaders began years ago to take an interest in the information revolution. See Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, *Cuba, Castro, and the World*. For a Cuban view, see Enrique González Mamet, *The Hidden War of Information*, translated by Laurien Alexandre, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, N.J., 1988, which is mostly about the international dimensions and implications of the information revolution.

<sup>8</sup>The APC has nodes in a number of other countries around the world.

that may be reached through CENIAI.<sup>9</sup> The on-line community is growing in Cuba, and there are plans to expand its relations with academic and other on-line communities abroad. As a long-term objective, U.S. policy might try to abet this trend, in the expectation that freer information flows should foster pluralist tendencies.

In addition, this policy option might include facilitating Cuban acquisitions of facsimile and copying machines, equipment for desktop publishing by small organizations, and hand-held video camcorders of the type increasingly favored by human-rights organizations for documenting incidents of abuse and spreading information to international audiences. Provisions of the embargo might be modified to allow the export of computer-related hardware, software, and other telecommunications and printing devices to Cuba.

Still, it is advisable to be cautious and not expect benefits soon from initiatives in this area. They worked well in helping to open up societies and bring down regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. For example, Poland's Solidarity movement was strengthened by Western provisions of fax machines. But there is no movement like Solidarity in Cuba for the United States to assist.

Moreover, Castro and his experts are aware of the double-edged nature of the information revolution. At present, they are doing a better job of using computer networks to get their messages out of Cuba than liberal democratic forces are doing at getting messages into Cuba. It is easy for Castro's partisans to find supporters and sympathizers outside Cuba who will echo their messages; in contrast, Americans may find it very difficult even to get a response to messages they may send electronically to contacts in Cuba. Over the long run, the information revolution should favor the growth of civil society in most areas of the world; but over the short run in Cuba, the state may be strengthened more than society.

**Expand person-to-person and institutional contacts.** This option might aim to expand selected person-to-person contacts between Cubans and Americans, partly to modify the perceptions of important Cuban groups regarding U.S. objectives and intentions. Increased U.S. visits by Cuban researchers, teachers, and professionals could be

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<sup>9</sup>The key Cuban networks linked to CENIAI are RedDavid (mainly for academic and research centers and some government-related offices) and TinoRed (the network of the Computer Youth Clubs). There are several smaller networks too, for example, RedUniv for the university system.

promoted, and their U.S. counterparts could be encouraged to go to Cuba. The latter might require removing the penalties and restrictions now confronting most U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba. It may also be useful to foster increased contacts and exchanges between exile organizations and those Cuban government and nongovernment actors willing to meet with them.

Furthermore, the Pentagon might pursue confidence-building measures with the Cuban military by notifying Cuba of U.S. military exercises, by inviting FAR observers to U.S. exercises and military facilities, and by offering to engage in educational exchanges, possibly including Cuban participation in the Inter-American Defense College. Improved information exchanges and communications channels might also be pursued with regard to drug interdiction.

### **Pros**

- Would increase the flow of ideas and information into and out of Cuba.
- May serve to build contacts and communications between people inside and outside Cuba, particularly between exiles and groups in Cuba.
- May gradually strengthen the hands of reformist elements in Cuba, inside as well as outside the regime.
- May make it easier for dissident elements to communicate with people outside Cuba.
- May help build a technological base for an eventual democratic opening within Cuba.
- May dispel the hostile image of the United States held by key groups associated with the regime.
- May help fragment the Cuban military, which shows signs of developing generational and possibly political cleavages.
- May be difficult for regime hardliners to counteract, especially if information-control efforts alienate reformist elements in the regime.
- May be strongly supported in exile communities where there is a longing for better communications.
- May be well received in Latin America as a positive step.

### Cons

- Might be treated as a partial victory by Castro (even though he would sense the double-edged nature of the policy).
- Would require modifying aspects of the embargo.
- Might lead U.S. businessmen to advocate lifting the embargo if they become excited about business opportunities as a result of increased information and communications.
- Would be difficult to engage the Cuban military in confidence-building measures, given the Castro brothers' tight control over the institution.
- Might heighten the Cuban military's threat perceptions, since Cuban awareness of the technical sophistication and overall superiority of U.S. armed forces might be sharpened through educational and training exchanges.
- May provide access to computer-related hardware and software and other communications technology that the regime needs, including for public surveillance and security purposes.
- May enable the Castro regime to expand its contacts and improve communications and consultations with outside networks of supporters and sympathizers, including in the United States.

The key uncertainties for this option include: (a) the extent to which it would help lead to the formation of nongovernment groups, and hence the strengthening of civil society; (b) whether easier access to new technologies and communications between the United States and Cuba would enhance the prospects for democratic reform (as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union) or lead to greater regime control and surveillance (as in China); (c) whether a comprehensive U.S. policy could be set in motion without making concessions to Cuba in other areas in order to get them to go along with the new policy; and (d) how well the regime may exploit its access to global networks for the purposes of communicating with its political supporters and sympathizers abroad, and attracting investors who want advanced telecommunications services.

### Concluding Comment

These generic options are amenable to various combinations. For example, the current policy of active containment could be augmented by racheting up some pressures on Havana, by easing pressures

through a conditional lifting of the embargo, or by increasing information flows to Cuba. One option need not be selected to the exclusion of another; elements from each might be combined to form a new policy package.

For example—to mention what we recommend below—a relatively low-cost, low-risk, high-flexibility option would be to combine elements of the present policy with measures to expand information and communication flows. Later, if a need arises, elements from another option could be included, to tailor U.S. policy to the situation unfolding in Cuba and better promote U.S. long-term as well as short-term objectives.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is an important moment to reassess U.S. policy options. The established policy of isolation and containment seems successful. But in light of the worsening situation in Cuba and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a new case may be made for increasing the pressure on the Castro regime, exploiting its vulnerabilities (including its lack of Soviet economic and military aid), and applying U.S. power to achieve Castro's downfall. At the same time, a new case may be made for relenting on U.S. economic and other pressures, partly because Cuba's potential for threatening U.S. interests has diminished and reformist elements on the island need to be nurtured.

Whatever case one hears for policy change, the emphasis is often on Castro and his troubles. The recent changes in the world order are overwhelming his comprehension and his capability to cope. His dreams of being on the winning side of history were dashed by the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe. They were further shattered in 1991 when the Gulf War confirmed the ascendance of the United States as the world's sole superpower, and then the failed right-wing coup and its aftermath in the Soviet Union confirmed his worst nightmare—the irreversibility of the demise of Marxism-Leninism and the breakup of the USSR. But though Castro looks increasingly archaic and weak to observers around the world, he is not finished, and he remains potentially dangerous in a crisis because of his personality streaks and the instruments he controls in Cuba. Moreover, U.S. policy toward Castro remains constrained by the fact that Latin Americans across the political spectrum, even people who oppose his policies and ideology, generally view him as a valuable icon of Latin American history and do not want him to end ignominiously at the hands of the United States.

These considerations must give the analyst pause before he or she rushes to argue that now is the time to abandon the established policy and either increase or decrease the pressures on Castro. A key point from the preceding review of the options is that "Cuba in the long term" is as important a factor as "Castro in the short term" to consider in weighing the pros and cons of each option. From this perspective, the cons and related uncertainties seem to decisively outweigh the pros for the options to greatly increase or decrease the pressures on Cuba and its regime; therefore, these options should not be selected at the present moment. Indeed, although this may be the likeliest of times for Castro to fall, it may also be one of the worst times for it to happen, because at present there is no strong civil (and therefore political) society to fill the vacuum that the demise of his dictatorship will leave. The dearth of organizational networks between groups in Cuba and abroad further augurs badly for a transition to a democratic post-Castro Cuba.

#### **Problems with Increasing or Decreasing Pressures**

Severely increased pressure—coercive diplomacy with a potential military component—is not clearly likely to succeed in bringing about the downfall of the Castro regime unless it is accompanied by direct U.S. military intervention. Yet such intervention is clearly likely to result in high political and diplomatic costs in Latin America, around the world, and at home in the United States if it is undertaken without substantial provocation from Cuba. Such intervention, unless conducted masterfully and almost instantly overwhelmingly, may also be likely to provoke an apocalyptic response from Castro and his adherents, and may embroil U.S. forces in civil warfare that negates important objectives for long-range U.S. interests, namely to minimize future bloodshed and nurture the bases for a future transition to democracy in which the United States is regarded as a positive partner.

Civil warfare would probably benefit the most extreme elements among the exiles, and assure years of divisiveness and retribution on Cuban soil. The task of reform and reconstruction is going to be difficult enough in a post-Castro Cuba under the best of transitions and circumstances. To undertake this task after a bloody conflict, with the Cuban peoples more divided than ever by vengeful hatreds, seems inadvisable.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>The testimony by Jorge I. Domínguez before the Western Hemisphere and Human Rights Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in May 1991,

Finally, this option has another serious strike against it—once enjoined, it would be difficult to shift direction. So long as Castro remains in office, he could treat any such shift as an admission of U.S. failure and a victory for himself. If thought is given to developing a coercive diplomacy option, or to intervening in response to a crisis in Cuba, it would be best to do so in conjunction with OAS members, if not the OAS itself.

The conciliatory option of decreasing the pressure on the Castro regime, notably by lifting the economic embargo, also has little to recommend it at this time. This option is supposed to nurture reformist elements. But it is not yet known who the reformers are, or whether they carry any weight in Cuban policy circles while Castro remains in power. Last year, a half-dozen or fewer names were repeatedly mentioned as reformists, but nobody knew what reforms they favored and whether they represented substantial sectors of elite and mass opinion in Cuba. This year, the man who was presumed to be the leading voice for reform, Carlos Aldana, has vowed obedience to Castro and voiced neo-Stalinist views about how Cubans should behave and be treated.

Also, this option is supposed to nurture civil society by fostering the formation of independent nongovernment groups and organizations. But the fusion of state and society in Cuba leaves little space for this to occur, and little on which to build. Increased economic exchanges with Cuba may lead indirectly to new groups and organizations, but there is no guarantee of this, especially if the regime is able to maintain a bifurcated economy that prevents the formation of a private sector. Lifting an economic embargo, moreover, will not translate automatically into a framework for ending political repression.

Furthermore, this option is supposed to elicit better behavior from Castro. But its main effect would probably be to shore up his regime economically and psychologically at a time when developments are not breaking his way anywhere. Why should the United States, by lifting the embargo, suddenly do more to help Castro than any other government in the world is willing to do? Why should the United States act in a way that may revitalize the Castro regime at a time in history when other communist governments have collapsed or been overthrown?

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reprinted in *Cuba in the Nineties: A Special Report by the Cuba Roundtable of Freedom House*, Freedom House, Inc., New York, 1991, pp. 34–39, provides an excellent itemization of problems that may afflict a post-Castro Cuba, including the "hatred and intolerance that marks politics among Cubans" on both sides of the Florida straits.



Finally, this option, unless tied to a *quid pro quo*, would throw away the principal U.S. trump card for an uncertain outcome. Once the embargo is dismantled and U.S. business interests develop a stake in Cuba, reimposing it would become virtually impossible.

A lot more ought to be known about the likely effects before the embargo is lifted. In particular—and partly because there have been no negotiations or discussions on the issue—it ought to be known in advance what kinds of access U.S. actors, business and otherwise, would have to individuals and organizations on the island if the embargo were lifted.

Rather than lifting the embargo as part of bilateral negotiations between the two countries, it would be far better for the United States to have the international financial community take the lead in requiring that the Castro regime move toward a market economy, and implement other major reforms, as a condition for IMF and World Bank assistance, and further integration into the global economy. Such a policy would remove the embargo as a contentious issue in U.S.-Cuban relations, internationalize the Cuban problem, and oblige Havana to deal with powerful financial actors in the international community upon whom it will become increasingly dependent if the island's economy continues to deteriorate.

### **Staying the Course but Augmenting Present Policy**

The established policy remains preferable to the alternatives just discussed. One strength is its flexibility. But alone it may not suffice to cope with the situation emerging in Cuba. For example, the established policy could be blindsided by the outbreak of a civil war in Cuba or a Latin American campaign to normalize relations with Cuba. More important, it is not very effective at building bridges to Cuban actors who may become the initiators of democratic reform and economic liberalization. It would be useful to find ways to add improvements to the current policy that compensate for its limitations.

U.S. options are typically discussed in terms of the three options just discussed: maintaining the current policy, raising the pressures, or lowering them. That is often the end of the framework. However, our analysis has identified a distinctive fourth option—strengthening information flows and communications bridges to Cuba—that derives from the significance of the worldwide information revolution. This option is yet to be deliberately formulated toward Cuba (or any other

country, for that matter), but it seems to have good potential for influencing trends in Cuba over the long run.<sup>11</sup>

An information and communications policy to influence trends in Cuba would not necessarily replace the current policy; it may be developed as a separate track. Moreover, it need not mean entering into an official U.S.-Cuban dialogue to discuss the relationship as a whole; improved communications between two societies do not necessarily imply negotiations between their governments, much less concessions. It also would not require rescinding the commercial and financial embargo (although the embargo might be modified regarding selected technology-related items, as mentioned earlier).

Another reason for recommending this combination is the principle, noted earlier, that no option should foreclose the adoption of another, nor should it be irreversible.<sup>12</sup> Adopting a policy to apply forceful U.S. pressures, or contrarily to lift the embargo, would close the possibility of moving to other options and may prove irreversible. In contrast, the current policy keeps U.S. options open; increased information and communication flows could expand them further.

But it might be advisable to close one option for the time being. In May 1991, President George Bush and Assistant Secretary of State Bernard Aronson stated that the United States is not planning a military intervention in Cuba. It might be advisable to reiterate this strongly—perhaps by providing a pledge not to intervene unilaterally—as part of a modified U.S. policy. A nonintervention stance might be given new substance by announcing a U.S. interest in exploring informational exchanges and confidence-building measures between the U.S. and Cuban armed forces. As Castro faces a “zero option” because of the absence of Soviet support, he will surely harp on the possibility of U.S. military aggression, not just because he believes it but also to solidify domestic resignation to and support for

<sup>11</sup>Similar recommendations for an information and communications policy come from Gillian Gunn, “Will Castro Fall,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 79, Summer 1990, pp. 132–150, and Robert G. Torricelli, “Let Democracy Shine Through an Open Door,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 1991, p. M5. Gunn is an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. Torricelli (D-N.J.) is chairman of the House subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs.

<sup>12</sup>We do not propose this as an absolute principle, only as one that seems correct for addressing the current situation in Cuba. There may be other situations in which it is advisable to close options, perhaps to make a firm commitment to proceeding in a particular direction, or to signal resolve to an adversary or partner. One of the most un-Latin American things Fidel Castro ever did was to close Cuba's options by insisting on a socialist economy and a single-party political system, leaving no space for moving to a mixed economic or political system.

his leadership. Moreover, Castro will recognize that a U.S. policy to promote information flows and communications bridges, without otherwise normalizing the U.S.-Cuban relationship, may stimulate internal pressures for liberalization, even as the policy may appear to relax the external pressure on Cuba. A U.S. nonintervention pledge might make it all the more difficult for him to oppose an informational policy.

A nonintervention pledge may also enable the United States to enlist the cooperation of two major regional and international players on the Cuban issue—Mexico and Spain. Thus far, Washington has been unable to prevent them from circumventing the U.S. embargo and promoting Cuba's membership in the Latin community, largely because strong domestic economic and political forces in both countries support such policies. A nonintervention stance by Washington could make it easier for the Mexican and Spanish governments to work in concert with the United States regarding trends and developments in Cuba. This would be particularly constructive if it led to joint support for dissident and human-rights groups on the island, something the Spanish government but not the Salinas administration has been doing. Similarly, a nonintervention pledge could make it easier for the IMF, the World Bank, and others in the international community to require that Cuba embark upon market reforms as a condition of financial assistance.

In conclusion, the policy implications from this analysis are to sustain the current policy but augment it with a parallel policy to increase information flows and build communication bridges to Cuba. The addition of these two components may put the United States in a better position to deal with an internal crisis in Cuba, and to lay the bases for an inter-American response (e.g., through the OAS) to a crisis in Cuba. This seems to be the best prescription for continuing to deal with a Fidel Castro who cannot change with the times, while preparing for a post-Castro Cuba that is bound to go through profound changes, requiring yet another U.S. policy.